

SERMONS

ON

Several Occasions:

By the late REVEREND

JOHN COOKE, A. M.

*Reclor of the United Parishes of St. George the
Martyr and St. Mary Magdalen in Canterbury,
and of Mersham in Kent, and one of the
Six Preachers of the Cathedral Church
of CANTERBURY.*

*Publiſh'd from the Manuscript Copy prepar'd by himself
for the Press.*

V O L. II.



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SERMON XVII.

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Of ZEAL, when commendable, and
when faulty.

ROM. x. 2.

*For I bear them record, that they have
a Zeal of God, but not according to
knowledge.*

ALTHO' religious worship, grounded
upon sound and satisfactory authority
(as that of the Christian is) justly calls
for the utmost Zeal, the most vigorous exertion
of all the faculties of the mind, nay, and
all the ardent desires, passions, and affections of
the sensitive soul : (all too little to be exercised
in so good a cause, and for so great and glorious
an interest.) Yet, notwithstanding, our
Zeal is very apt to be faulty in the excess, and

to expose us and our profession, through ignorance, and blinder prejudice, by education, and first and false principles, by self-will and not loving to be opposed, and through an overweening conceit of ourselves, and our own opinions; so that there is perhaps in nothing a greater and more dissolute intemperance than in our religion. For as the extremes of some virtues are more vicious, at least more mischievous, than the opposite vices; so in some sort of zeal, there is an excess, a certain violence and turbulency, more incorrigible, and more destructive to the ends of true religion, than irreligion it self.

One would think the Christian Religion could never be subject to such intemperance; so meek and calm in its nature, so happily strong and firm in its frame and constitution, that it could no way be vitiated or corrupted: and yet this, the best temper'd of all religions, by the giddy-headed management of many of its Professors, hath been subjected to all the profuse and extravagant excursions of zeal; by which Governments have had too just reasons to complain of its mischievous effects: and what our innocent Apostle, and some others, were unjustly upbraided with, some of their profession have since abundantly made good the accusation, of turning the world upside down. That religion, which in its first establishment was so tender of governments, so great an enemy to faction, that it never reach'd out the least finger towards its support, hath since, by the per-

perfidious cunning and conduct of some men, (who must be called Christians too) been brought in, in full body, for the raising and fomenting of disturbances and seditious commotions. It was design'd, and chiefly design'd, to allay and moderate passions, and conquer lusts; but it will serve too upon occasion (as men shall apply it) to inflame both, and give them the greater vent. And thus, when it breaks over its own bounds, it is then commonly call'd *Zeal*; that is, in their sense, the heights and fruitful overflowings of religion; but, in truth, the excrescences and filthy tumours of it.

The horrid mischiefs of such Zeal we meet with in almost all sorts of histories, and all ages, especially *Jewish* and *Christian*; by which parties have been so blinded, or indeed maddened, that they have broke down, not only all the boundaries of true religion, but those too of natural justice, and let in upon themselves the greatest confusions and calamities. But, to discourse in some method, let us

I. Enquire after this mistaken Zeal, or such as is not *according to knowledge*.

II. Endeavour to discover that true Zeal, which is the more happy accomplishment of our religion, and is justly requir'd in so great a concern.

I. Of this unwarrantable Zeal: to discover which, we should consider how far *St. Paul*

avouches for his brethren and countrymen, the *Jews* : he allows them a zeal, which is a very commendable qualification of religion, only stains it with such a blot, as may either easily be clean'd away, or if it remains, is not so foul or disfiguring as quite to cover and obscure the face of their religion ; a zeal with ignorance, not regulated with discretion, and that for want of knowing better, which we commonly call an error on the right hand, that is, capable of alleviation and amendment. *St. Peter* is willing to make the same excuse for them, in a higher matter, *Acts* iii. 17. *And now, brethren, I wot that thro' ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers* : meaning no less than that execrable fact of crucifying their *Messias*. Not that prejudice or wilful malice are wholly excluded in either instance, but it is an allowable civility (worthy of our imitation) even in these most sincere Apostles, to take an accusation or charge by the fairest handle, and not to be rigorous to the minutes of aggravation, when we are to implead an adversary, whom we would convince, and would be willing in some measure to indemnify. Altho' the down right truth is, that they were by no means under the circumstances of what we call an invincible, and, so far, an excusable ignorance : for the predictions of their Prophets so accomplished in the virtues, the doctrines, and miracles of *Christ*, so well known amongst them, could be no less than demonstration, that he was the true *Messias*, at least so undoubted

ed a great Prophet, that could never have been so barbarously treated but by wilful, prepenſe malice and cruelty.

Now then we may lay the accusation home, and treat of Zeal, from whatſoever origin it ariſes, and howſoever tainted or corrupted: and if we conſider the various extravagances of it among the *Jews*, we ſhall the more eaſily diſcover when our own is right or wrong.

Theirs was chiefly converſant about their law, their opinions and practice of it; their pretended peculiar claim and ſole title to the favours of heaven, which was the bigotry of the whole nation: it was too the profeſſion of a certain ſect among them, who were called the *zealots*, and pretended to a *jus zelotarum*, a kind of a divine right to the exerciſe of it.

I. Now, one inſtance of their ignorant and fooliſh zeal conſiſted in not diſtinguiſhing betwixt the ſhadows and the ſubſtance, the rudiments and the full completion of their law: that oeconomy and conſtitution which was to be temporary, and that which was an inſtrick and eternal obligation. By which abſurdity their zeal was wholly ſpent upon ceremonies and punctilios, outward waſhings and ſuperficial purifications, circumciſing their children, and ſlaying their cattle; and ſo ſhifted off the harder taſks of piety and purity, of reſtraining and conquering luſts and paſſions, and raiſing habits of virtue and goodneſs: whereas one act of righteous and true holineſs was more valuable in the eſteem of

heaven than a whole hecatomb of their sacrifices: and judgment, mercy, and truth were like the God of them, infinitely transcendent to all the most zealous and devout rites that could be instituted or put in practice. To make these out-works all their religion, employ, or indeed waste, all their zeal and devotion upon them, was to shame the divine institution, and pervert the end of it; so it was but time to erase such laws, and destroy the whole oeconomy.

Now Christianity, one would think, was absolutely provided against all such degeneracy: its very constitution being utterly exclusive of all those legal and carnal observances. And yet the church of *Rome* hath made shift to dress it up with almost as many rites and ceremonies as they could have picked up out *Leviticus*; tho' they have, for the most part, borrowed them elsewhere; by which they have made a religion of the finest and divinest composition, to look as antique as the *Heathenish* or *Jewish* worship. Nay, as the *Jews*, by their many superstructures of superstition, had made their religion, which was primitively of divine extract and institution, to become even the very scorn of the *Heathens*, and themselves derided by their poets and historians for the most absurd credulity, and most ridiculous modes of worship: so have these pretended *Catholicks* among Christians, so monstrously metamorphosed the pure and innocent aspect of Christianity, that they have lost
many

many arguments and pleas for its defence and just preference to all other religions in the world: wherefore *Infidels* and *Mahometans*, *Atheists* and *Deists*, will rather continue as they are than embrace it. Besides, these formalities have bore away all the zeal from the substantial duties, and these Catholics (as they would be called) shall value and distinguish themselves by their punctual and zealous adherence to these outward and unscriptural observances, more than by their faith or practice of any fundamental article or precept of the true catholic religion.

Their fund or treasure of merits hath been chiefly rais'd out of the superstitious and ceremonious parts of their religious worship; strict and nice obedience to their canons and discipline hath ever been esteemed of higher value and merit, than to the most indispensable commandments of the Gospel. And to raise their Church into pomp and glory, into grandeur and tyranny, hath given more titles to saints among them, than any pious, humble, and charitable ways of promoting and exalting the kingdom of Jesus.

Now tho' there be no fear of our falling into *Jewish* or *Popish* zeal of this nature, (we have better knowledge, and stand in a clearer light: more especially we cannot but know, that by the coming of Jesus Christ into the flesh, revealed religion was from form and show, shadow and figure, reduced to substance, to moral goodness and righteousness) yet our

zeal is very apt to go the old way, to spend it self in formalities and outward exercises, in keeping up little distinctions, and badges of a party, with fury and vehemence against the opposite one, whilst true substantial virtue and holiness lies cold and benumb'd: and we feel but little warmth to make us exemplarily pious and zealous of good works.

2. Another mistake and miscarriage in the Jewish zeal St. Paul seems to aim at, is, their attributing merit and righteousness to these out-works of the law, which raises him into some severe and pathetick expressions against *justification by works*, ascribing or imputing any righteousness to them: here he seems to place their ignorant zeal in their violence for legal observances, without understanding the nature of true righteousness; as appears from the two next verses following the Text: *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* Its meaning is plain and emphatical here, and in all other places of this Epistle of the like import, concerning the ceremonies and outward performances of the law, which were called ἔργα νόμου, *the works of the law*; in respect whereof the Jews were said to be ζηλωταὶ τοῦ νόμου, *zealous, or zealots*, for these legal observances: and whoever is such, ἐπαπαυέται τοῦ νόμου, *resteth in the law*, and thence maketh his boast of God. And certainly, all that he hath said,

said, can give no manner of ground or countenance to the modern controversies (wherein a great deal of unnecessary zeal hath been expended, and innumerable as unnecessary volumes wrote) of justification by faith only, exclusive of works done in the faith: not in the least intending to bar evangelical works of righteousness, nor the observation of the moral law, that is, acts of virtue and true holiness, from their proper share in justification, tho' they are no ways the efficient or meritorious causes of it. And therefore, (*Rom. iii. 27.*) he distinguishes between νόμος ἔργων, and νόμος, the law of works, and of faith. The works of the law, the nice observance of which the *Pharisees* so much depended upon, could not justify: but the law of faith, which implied a living up to the dictates of that faith, must be an indispensable condition in our justification. So, *verse* the last of that chapter, he makes out his meaning: *Do we then make void the law thro' faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.* That is, in effect we do determine and declare the necessity, and indispensable obligation, of sound and sincere obedience to all the commandments of Christ, who came to fulfil the law of *Moses*.

Modesty and lowliness do ever attend the practice of true virtue and substantial holiness: and they that follow them most closely, and with the greatest zeal, will always, in just humility, cry out, *We are yet unprofitable servants.* But, to be zealous against good works, under a modest pretence that they can no way,
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in no degree, justify us before God, or be accepted of him, is a monstrous contradiction to the whole tenour of the Scriptures, and the very nature of a law, which can be no such thing, if it do not oblige to submission and obedience.

And yet such *Antinomians* we have had among us; and those very hot and turbulent zealots; who have vilified good works with ill names, as dross, and dung, and filthy rags; enough indeed (as it too often proved) to make any one loath the practice of them: should such an error be of general persuasion, it would prove more destructive to all the ends of true religion and morality, than any *Jewish* or *Popish* doctrine whatsoever: but its grossness and absurdity is a sufficient confutation. And so I pass to

3. A third instance of their ignorant and misguided zeal, which was shewn, upon all occasions, in confining their law, with all the privileges and advantages thereof, to their own nation; and thereupon upbraiding the Apostles for pretending to a new revelation and authority from heaven, and yet with a reserve and designation of extending the benefit thereof to the instruction and salvation of the *Gentiles*; when to themselves, (and to them alone, and for ever as they thought, and would have it thought) *pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.* And our Apostle readily acknowledges their right of precedency in these high favours and privileges,
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in the foregoing chapter, *verse 4.* but withal he would have them to understand, that the *children of the promise*, and the *spiritual seed* were of much larger extent than the natural, or those that descended by the flesh. So that tho' the original settlement was made upon the *Jews*, and those only had among them the oracles of God for many ages, yet a reserve was included for the *Gentile* world: as *Abraham* from the beginning was made a *father of many nations* * : which promise was to be accomplished at the coming of the *Messias*, who was of the seed of *Abraham*, and in whom *all nations* were to be *blest*: that is, put into a capacity of everlasting blessings thro' faith and obedience, which as they were infinitely transcending all the blessings of the land of *Canaan*, so they were to be extended beyond those bounds, even to all the nations upon earth.

This the *Jews* would by no means allow of, but insisted upon the peculiarity of their election; and reprobated all the world beside, as hated and rejected of God. So the Apostle had a strong prejudice to remove, which they ignorantly, and so with the more violent zeal, had long adhered unto. It was written, *Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated*; and therefore you cannot go to the *Gentiles*; upon which they founded a decree of all heavenly favours, irreversibly settled upon them; an entail of mercies

Gen. xvii. 4, 5. Rom. iv. 17, 18. Gal. iii. 6, 7, 8, 9. and ver. 26, and 29.

mercies never to be cut off or forfeited. But he would have them know, this was purely grace and favour, no right of inheritance, but as they behaved themselves. For tho' God is unchangeable, yet he may change sides upon that unchangeable Reason of loving, and manifesting himself to those who will receive him, and continue in faith and obedience to him : and in this relation the case may be altered, altho' he is unalterable. As thus, the posterity of *Jacob* have I loved, 'till their ingratitude and rebellion grew to that height of provocation, as to call out for a total rejection of them. But now, why not receive the posterity of *E-sau* ? that is, the *Gentile* world, into favour, if they will come to terms, and enter into a covenant of faith and obedience, and embrace the offers of salvation, which the *Jews* have slighted and renounced ? and this too still agreeable to the justice, as well as to the uncontrollable will and pleasure of God, who will *have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth*, i. e. leaveth them to persist and go on in the obstinacy, which was their own choice and resolution ; which was then, and continues still, the case of the *Jews*.

So the case seems plainly determined (in the foregoing mystical *chapter*, as some have made it) from the mouth of God, as the Apostle quotes the words from the Prophet : --- *I will call them my people, which were not my people ; and her, beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said*

said unto them, *Ye are not my people ; there shall they be called, the children of the living God **. Paul and Barnabas pronounced the farewell, (*Acts xiii. 46, 47.*) who waxed bold, and said to the Jews : *It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you : but seeing ye put it from you, and judge your selves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, (*Isaiah xlix. 6.*) *I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.* This they were provoked to declare upon the behaviour of the Jews ; of whom it is said, in the foregoing verse, that when they saw the multitudes, that is, the great numbers that followed the Apostles, *they were filled with envy, with zeal,* for so is the original, ἐπλήρυσαν ζήλῳ; and spake against those things, contradicting, and blaspheming.

In a word, vocation, i. e. calling the Gentiles, or making the overtures of salvation to them, upon the obstinacy and refusal of the Jews, according to the absolute decree and determinate counsel of God, was the subject St. Paul was upon, in that forementioned ninth chapter to the Romans ; without any relation to God's eternal decrees, by which the everlasting lot and fate of mankind, without any respect to good or evil, is fore-ordained and determined.

* Rom. ix. 25, 26. Hosea ii. 25. and i. 10.

But

But as this pretence to the peculiarity, and engrossing of divine favours, and God's especial election, did, upon all occasions, raise the *Jews* into a *πικρὸν ζῆλον*, a *bitter zeal*, or envying, against *Heathens* and *Publicans*; as thinking they may, with allowance and privilege, hate and treat with despite, as they pleased, whom they thought to be hated and rejected of God: so they that have gone deeper in these melancholick doctrines, have shewn too many instances of their hard-hearted zeal. Who thinks himself a true *Israelite*, but presently conceits he may spoil an *Egyptian*? Who thinks himself elected of God (as most are apt to do that are fond of that opinion) and another reprobated, but will be apt to make more bold in engrossing all the desirable blessings of this life, if he could in any likelihood get them into his clutches? From hence sprung that damnable doctrine, 'That dominion was founded in grace, and all the possessions in the world did of right belong to the Saints'; which, whenever maintained, was carried on and executed with a furious and fiery zeal.

This is the charge we justly lay upon our common enemy: that Church that will damn all others to hell, will not stick at a less thing, despoiling and destroying them in this life, when ever they shall come into their power. And it is ill trusting to the mercies of those upon earth, tho' otherwise Reformed, who set up monopolies in heaven, and get the everlasting blessings of God into as few hands as they

they possibly can, themselves always of the number: we are much more safe under the will and power of God, tho' the most arbitrary and uncontrollable, as he said to *Moses*; and our *Apostle* reports it, *ver. 15. of the foregoing chapter, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*

Ill-nature, and the most rigid effects of it, have been observed to be natural to the maintainers of that doctrine, and indeed consequential to it: but power and mercy belongeth unto God, *who will render to every man according to his works.*

4. I cannot omit speaking of that peculiar sect among the *Jews*, called the *Zealots*: the foulest instance of their zeal I have yet named, and yet some time of greatest vogue and reputation among them: they were a sort of ruffians, who committed all manner of outrages, and bloody riots, out of zeal for God, and fighting his quarrels; who pretended to a right, or commission, of executing immediate vengeance upon profane, blasphemous, or idolatrous persons, as they came in their way; or any others they found in actual commission of any enormities, or lewdness; and at last upon all who were not of their party, or whose opinions, or practices, did not please them.

They founded their authority upon the action of *Phineas*, who, being inflamed with zeal, slew the unclean couple, *Zimri* and *Cosbi*,

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in the very act of their transgression, without any proceedings of law, (*Numb. xxv.*) by which he diverted an impending judgment, and stayed the plague already begun; for which he was commended and approved of God, while he was zealous for his sake, and upon which God gave unto him his covenant of peace, as you read at the eleventh and following *verses*.

This was thought so plausible a pretence to set up their Sect, that the *Jews* did generally approve of it, as thinking that men may be possessed with such a fervour (or indeed fury) of the divine spirit, as of right to become the immediate executioners of God's wrath and vengeance upon malefactors in the very act of their wickedness. But their *jus zelotarum*, as they hence called it, was falsely grounded; for what *Phineas* did, was not as a private person, but as a magistrate, and by order of his superiors, as seems to be plain enough intimated, *ver. 4, 5.* when command was given first by God, and then by *Moses*, for the inflicting immediate death upon all that committed whoredom with the daughters of *Mobab*, and all that had joined themselves unto *Baal-peor*. Or, if we allow it to be arbitrary, and the immediate transport of his own zeal, it must be ascribed to that *dispensatio liberi spiritus* (as *Mr. Mede* calls it) that freer dispensation of the spirit, as to such acts of zeal, under that divine Theocracy, or immediate government of God: but upon no account to be drawn into example or practice, quite inconsistent

consistent with the Gospel temper. Our Lord would by no means allow so much as the thought or suggestion of it: when *James* and *John* would have had fire called down from heaven upon a village of *Samaria*, he sharply reprehends 'em in that expression: *ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of*; nor would he in the least justify, or so much as excuse, or extenuate *St. Peter's* rash courage in cutting off *Malchus's* ear, tho' in his master's just defence; but severely denounces against the fact, and the practice of it, upon any such occasion. *All they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword.* Now what these three Disciples desired, or acted, they thought allowable, *jure zelotarum*, by the common right of Zealots: which, tho' so unjustifiable and so falsely grounded, was yet kept up with almost a general vogue and allowance, and in the most execrable practices, especially in this last age we are upon, and towards the period of the *Jewish* church and state.

Our blessed Proto-Martyr, *St. Stephen*, was a most doleful sacrifice to this most barbarous zeal: he is the most signal sufferer upon record, by the hands of these bloody Zealots, as all Commentators agree concerning their proceedings against him: all were illegal and arbitrary; only *jure zelotarum*, a pretended right of the Zealots: *per vim & tumultum*, says *Mr. Calvin*; *per seditionem*, says *Grotius*, by a popular insurrection. It could not be by a judicial proceeding, as both assign the reasons. 1. Because the *Romans* had taken from the *Jews*, all power in capital

causes ; and then in our Saviour's case, they pleaded themselves, *that it was not lawful for them to put any man to death.* 2. They acted beside their own law, if they should have claimed any reserve of power, which from *Deut. xiii.* inflicted that capital punishment upon none but the authors of, or seducers to idolatry, which was not charged upon *St. Stephen.* He only undertook (good man) to inform them, and set them right, by a long, rational, and pious discourse ; and that it seems to them proved sufficiently provoking, *they were cut to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth :* (the usual rage of zealots, who are made the more furious by conviction, and are ashamed to be converted or desist) *and cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord ; and cast him out of the city, and stoned him :* and whosoever shall dare to instruct or reform a rabble of Zealots, must run the like venture of his brains.

And, if thro' all the histories of their turbulent motions, we grant them an instance or two wherein they chanced to be in the right as to the cause ; yet not one to be found upon record, wherein they observed the right measures of that true cause ; wherein they did not stigmatize and brand their profession, with all the scandalous marks of a fiery zeal, even sometimes those of rapine, rebellion, and murder. So much for the sake, and in the cause of our blessed *Martyr.*

It hath indeed been suggested by some, in favour of this sort of zeal, that our Lord himself

self did in some manner exercise it, when he whipped the buyers and sellers, and changers of money, out of the temple, and overthrew the tables, viz. that he did it *jure zelotarum*; upon which his Disciples remembred and applied what was written by holy *David*, *Psal. lxi. 9. The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.* But observe from the relation, *John ii. 15.* it was with a scourge he made of *small cords* that he exercised this severity, which might smart, but would not wound; but they that came with *Judas* against himself, to apprehend him, were armed with staves and swords, with killing weapons, and a band of ruffians: and they against *St. Stephen*, with shoals of stones, for immediate execution; both the most murdering instruments that ever could be devised by the maddest zeal and most inhuman cruelty. What our Lord did, was for instruction, correction, and amendment; what these villains did, was for destruction, crucifying, excruciating, and total extirpation. Judge, I pray, betwixt these two instances of zeal.

This latter race of Zealots we have further matter against, so shall pursue them to the end, which, after this barbarous fact, was but short, and they made but short work of it, in bringing themselves and their whole nation into a total destruction and desolation. They fell to turning out the High-Priests that were of the blood, and put in those that were ignoble and base, that they might make them the abettors of their villanies: profaned the temple, and

made it, in the truest sense, *a den of thieves*: massacred their brethren, rifled the houses of all that were not of their faction; and did, as it were, extort cruelty from the *Romans*, who were otherwise inclined to compassion, to repress the cruelties of these villanous Zealots: *istorum hominum, quos Ἰουδαῖαι Josephus vocat, crescens indies audacia, &c.* as *Grotius* tells us, in his annotations upon the martyrdom of our blessed Saint: the boldness of those Zealots daily increasing stirred up the anger of the *Romans* that besieged, to an irresistible necessity of destroying both their city and temple: and yet, after all, the slaughters by the *Romans* were far inferiour in number, and less cruel, than those that had been made by the zealots.

To make any application here, as I have done in the other instances, I hope will not be required. I must be short. It is true there have been from *Rome*, and some other places too, some in our christian ages that have come up pretty near to the height of this *Jewish* zeal. And we have known, upon both sides of us, an Order of Zealots, some of which have borrowed their name from the holy *Jesus*, and others have assumed the title of *Saints*, that have done as much mischief, with their turbulent zeal, as can be matched out of the ill effects of *Judaism* or *Infidelity*. The doctrines and practices of the former are well known, from the massacres and bloody martyrdoms they have made, and are upon record: and let us draw a curtain over the latter, because
their

their zeal of this nature is, it seems, (as they would have it thought) remitted, and now more happily (as they call out for it towards themselves) turned into moderation.

But in a word, any religion, or none at all, would be more creditable to an honest moral man, than that which we call Christian, when it is blown up into this pestilent zeal, and breaths out nothing but violence and persecution. But as this sort of zeal is as contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, as the vilest dissoluteness and impiety; so is it not at all to be laid to the charge of our most holy religion, which is all peace and quietness, but to the evil dispositions and designs of men, who in this last and most degenerate ages have arrived to the devil's skill and cunning, of using and transforming the best things to the worst purposes. As he can shape himself into the appearance of an angel of light, so what can be a more gainful effect and achievement of his malice, than to cloud our pure and most bright Christianity with works of darkness, and blacken it according to his own peculiar colour, with all hellish designs and practices.

But enough of this filthy zeal; we should now enquire after that which is the most decent and graceful accomplishment of our religion. For as God doth justly require the submission of our reason and understanding to the doctrines of faith, which he hath revealed; and that our wills also should as tractably fall in with all obedience to his laws, which he hath

made known to us, and enjoined ; so likewise our passions and affections ought to do their parts, and when they move and actuate us as they should do in all the offices and duties of our holy religion, they add life and spirit to it ; and this we call *zeal* very allowable and commendable.

To conclude for the present, with the etymology of it. It is derived from two little words, ζῆω and λείαν, *valde ferveo*, that signify more than ordinary heat and fervency, and so we ought to look to it, and watch it, that it do not burn or flame out too much ; for what we say of its original, *fire, that it is a good servant, but an ill master*, is as true of our zeal : if we can govern it, it will be the most lively and useful assistant in devotion, and in all religious exercises ; but if it becomes fiery, and masterless, it may soon destroy and consume its own fabrick and habitation, and endanger the whole neighbourhood. The safest course we can take, is not to venture it too much abroad, it is apt to rove and rave, and do more harm than good : only to exert it in these publick places of worship, with earnestness and sincerity of devotion, and withal, a due mien of decent and serious behaviour ; and then we may shut it up in our closets, and there we may freely spend it in all the highest and most expressive elevations of our souls to God, in holy meditations and ejaculations, in prayer and thanksgiving. And this is as far as I can, at present, go (without being tedious) towards the discovering of that true zeal, that is the more
happy

happy accomplishment of our religion, and is justly required in so great a concern; which is the second head I propounded to discourse upon, but must reserve it to another opportunity.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all majesty, power, and adoration, now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

PART II. Preached just before *Lent*.

Of ZEAL, when commendable, and allowable.

ROM. X. 2.

For I bear them record, that they have a Zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

IN justice to the subject I was last upon, (whether required, or so much as remembered) I must now, according to promise, speak all the good things I possibly can concerning our *zeal*. As I have already delivered some

bad instances of it, that we may avoid its malignity; so I shall now endeavour to recommend its spirit and activity, as far as it moves and is employ'd with piety and prudence. And this I am to do on that second general head I purposed to speak to; which was to be

II. A discovery of that true well-guided zeal, that is the more happy accomplishment of our religion, and is justly required in so great a concern.

And yet still tho' our zeal be oftener in the wrong than in the right, (the subject on that side the text being not yet exhausted) I shall not forbear, upon occasion, to make due reflections upon that extravagant zeal (as it shall come in my way) which is opposite to, or is the excess of that which is true and commendable.

To begin then where I left off: I told you the safest course we could take with our zeal, would be not to venture it too much abroad, but to keep it at home as much as we can; for when it gets out, it is very apt to be intemperate and extravagant, and subject to raving fits and furious flights, which often-times turn to downright madness: for so St. Paul describes his own zeal against the Christians; as that he was exceedingly mad against them, *compelled them to blaspheme*, and *persecuted them even to strange cities* (Acts xxvi. 11.) and such indeed had been his behaviour, as St. Luke describes it (Acts viii. 3. and cap. ix. 1.) how he *made havock of the church,*

church, entering into every house, and baling men and women, committed them to prison; and continually breathing out threatnings and slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord; till he was brought to his right wits by a vision, and received the grace of God. And the zealous prosecutors of St. Stephen gave a very usual token of madness, of whom it is said, Acts vii. 54. they gnashed on him with their teeth.

In order then to the government of this passion, which when regular and orderly, is of so great use in religion, but when unruly and disorderly, so very mischievous, we should endeavour to fix upon the proper subjects or objects of our zeal; and then to consider of the due measure and proportion of such zeal, as is to be exercised and exerted upon them. For as great and violent zeal is very unsuitable to little and indifferent matters; so the greatest and weightiest matters will not justify any zeal that shall carry men over the bounds of any moral obligations, or essential duties of the Christian Religion.

Now God, and his honour, and the salvation of mankind, religion, and all that is just and honourable, are the proper objects of our zeal; and the passions that are mostly exercis'd about them, are most commonly those two, of love and hatred, because they usually carry us to the transports of affection, or aversion.

I. A true love of God will raise in us a zealous concern for his honour, his laws, and every thing that bears a special relation to him; so the *Psalmist* expresses his zeal, *Psal. cxix. 20.*
 lxix.

lxix. 9. *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath for thy judgments at all times: and the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up;* meaning his zealous concern for the church of God, which was, it seems, in his days always in danger, from the principles and practices of wicked and blasphemous men.

2. A just hatred of sin will rouse us up to all zealous indignation against all manner of wickedness, against the causes, and occasions, and examples of it, with strenuous endeavours for its suppression and extirpation. Thus the *Psalmist* again often expresses himself in *tears and agonies, in pains and pangs, because the enemies of God violate his laws, and blaspheme his name, and are sometimes powerful and prosperous in their wickedness.* And his zealous concern at the impieties of his own enemies was often as grievous to him; *my zeal, (Psal. cxix. 139.) hath consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten thy words.*

To regulate our zeal in respect to both passions, let us make use of the following cautions or restraints; and then I shall conclude with two or three necessary rules or methods, for the discharging or expending our zeal. As to the former:

(1.) Because our passions are the chief emissaries for the carrying on our zeal, let us carefully look to them, that they do not vent the malignity of temper, of a malicious disposition and design, under the pretext of a zeal of God, and religion. It is very common to overlook, or seem to disregard, the personal resentments

ments we have against some men, or some parties of men, and carry on a great deal of inhuman and unchristian vehemency and bitterness against them, under a pretence of a zealous and just detestation of their wicked principles, opinions, and practices, and perhaps not justly charged upon them. St. *James* speaks of a *πικρὸς ζήλος*, a bitter envying, as it is translated, which he expounds by *lying against the truth*; and such is this prevarication when men prosecute their malicious prejudices with all manner of slander, under the specious, but lying appearances, of zeal for God and religion.

(2.) We must suspect all manner of zeal, tho' heightened with the most glorious pretences of God's honour, the safety, honour, or preservation of his church, that casts the least look upon a breach of any fundamental duty of religion: if the bounds of peace and charity are violated, or trampled upon, it is impossible that that zeal should be right and good, whatsoever good and righteous things it intends or pursues: as impossible as that the long, tho' zealous, prayer of an old *devourer* of *widows houses* should be accepted with God: or that praying, zealous, whining and preaching should make any atonement for the blood and desolation of twenty years Rebellion. That zeal is direct enmity and opposition to Christianity, that carries us out of its bounds, and is first in the transgression; that puts us upon the breach of a divine precept to make way for the promotion of that religion which indispensably en-
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joins it. In the name of God, let us be highly zealous for his honour, and his worship, without any remission, or intermission, but ever with a *salvo* to mercy, and judgment, and truth; to patience and humility, to forbearance and forgiveness, which are the essential duties of the Gospel, and the inseparable properties and attributes of the Divine nature. Zeal for God, and his religion, cannot alter or change the nature of good and evil: and our Apostle declares it to be a damnable doctrine to maintain, that *evil may be done that good may come*. No cause of God, or true religion, can stand in need, or put us upon the necessity of any such defence or vindication. Faction and sedition, and schism, and breaking the bonds of peace and charity, are no methods of God's allowing, in any cause of his, no more than of another extremity of zeal, which is indeed all the religion (a wrong name) some people shew, of drinking, damning, and hectoring for the church. The higher the zeal rises in such instances, the greater is the crime and condemnation: such practices very rightly answer a proverb I have heard of *playing the devil for God's sake*. Job exclaims against all such nauseous officiousness in the behalf of God, as vile and detestable. *Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him? will ye contend for God?* Job xiii. 7, 8. This is a most wicked blunder in our zeal, (to say no worse of it) with violence and blindness to pursue godly designs and ends, and not to regard what vile and impious means are made use of to bring them about.

A zeal according to knowledge will take other measures, not move a step towards the most pious and glorious enterprize, 'till it is secured and satisfied in the innocency and honesty of all the precedent expedients, that are necessary for the production and accomplishment.

(3.) A zeal according to knowledge will, with wise and deliberate consideration, determine first, before it sets forth, whether the good it pursues or defends be really and substantially such, or the evil it prosecutes be so certain and considerable, as to require so much concern and vehemency against it. For upon uncertain and inconsiderable goods, and upon little, tolerable, and despicable evils, it will not be safe to venture out so much passion as is commonly hurried along with our zeal; because to establish the former, or remove the latter, may produce many unhappy effects, that very often arise from change and innovation. It is the most vicious zeal that is carried with vehemency against what is good, or in the promotion of what is evil: and it is usually a petulant and ill-tempered zeal to be swelled up into indecent passion upon the bare fancy or imagination of good, or upon petty, or tolerable evils or inconveniences: instances in relation to both I have given already, in my last Discourse upon this subject.

Now good intention, or the pretence of conscience, can never be a sufficient warrant for all the transactions of a zeal of God. I verily thought, says our Apostle, (*Acts xxvi. 9.*) that I

ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth ; and (Gal. i. 13, 14.) ye have heard, says he, of my conversation, in times past, in the Jews religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it : --- being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. And again to Timothy, 1 Epist. i. 13. he owns himself to have been a blasphemer, a persecuter, and injurious ; upon all which he elsewhere pronounces himself the chiefest of sinners. All this was zeal, and with a very religious intent, and yet a mortal sin, and would have proved damnable, had he persever'd in it.

Our reason and understandings therefore must look about them, and ever make serious and diligent application, to the word of God for direction, and to his Holy Spirit for assistance, to set us and keep us right, when we are raising ourselves into zeal, or putting it into execution.

For as ignorance hath been rightly called the mother of devotion, so zeal is often-times a brat of the same birth ; and therefore it is, that we most often find it amongst ignorant, rude, and illiterate people, and ever is the most fiery, furious, and hot-headed, as they want wit and understanding, either to restrain or moderate it : and the devil is never fitted with better instruments and engines, than when he makes use of them, and their zeal, to carry on his designs against the honour and safety of the Church of God.

(4.) A zeal according to true knowledge and wisdom, ought to be stable and impartial, and not

not desultory and inconsistent. What transports of zeal may we observe in some people, for a cause or a party, when up and flourishing? But when falling or down, How visibly doth the zeal cool and abate, and very often, with an impudent vehemency, rise again on the contrary side? And then again, How unfair and trickish is our zeal in relation to some virtues, and some vices? to obedience and disobedience to the commandments of God? With a very uneven hand, and great partiality, shewing our favours to some duties and some sins, and being regardless to others. The *covetous man* is very zealous for the *reformation of manners*, and against immorality and *profaneness*; and a most excellent and commendable zeal it is, and indeed they are commonly very expensive sins, and he knows it; but he has no manner of zeal against his own avarice, against sordidness and close-handedness, against uncharitableness and oppression, against any of the frauds and shifts (such as are not downright stealing) that are the ways and means of making haste to grow rich. So again, some very godly professors of religion we have heard of, of old, that have expressed themselves in wonderful zeal for the *first table* of the law; and it is properly a zeal of God, and very plausible and praise worthy, because it contains more especially our duty towards God, and he ought first and principally to be served: but then, for that zeal of ours to abate and be remiss, in respect to the *second table*, must make the former but nauseous
and

and detestable hypocrisy and partiality, in the fight of God, and indeed in the judgment of all good men. And we cannot but have observed, how unfavourly, from these places, have been most discourses upon those subjects; as for instance, against *rebellion* and *disobedience* to *sovereign powers*, and for *submission* and *obedience* to *them*, against *malice* and *injury*, and for *forgiveness* and *restitution*: against *lying* and *slandering*, and *cheating*, and for *truth* and *sincerity*, and *upright dealing*, and *punctual honesty*; against *coveting* and *craving*, and for *charity*, and *liberality*, and a *communicative* and *peaceable conversation* in the world. But more monstrously absurd hath the same sort of zeal shewn it self, when it hath exalted the *fourth* above all the commandments; and made the height and source of all piety and impiety to consist in the observation, or what they shall call the profanation of it.

No fault would be found with their zeal, if it were carried with an equal hand, with the same affection to other duties, and with the like aversion to other sins. But 'tis a miserable deception, when the partial and inconsistent zealot shall trust and acquiesce in this peculiarity and choiceness of his zeal, justify himself like the *Pharisee* before God, and look upon himself to be of the uppermost order of ferious and godly liver.

(5.) Lastly, That our *zeal of God* may be according to true knowledge and understanding, we must take care that we do not estimate or value

lue it by its noise and vehemency, or from sudden flashes and transitory ebullitions: they are by no means infallible indications of a sound zeal, which ought to be permanent and lasting as far as we are able to keep it up, and so need not exert it self faster or higher, than as we are able to hold it. For the passions are rais'd upon many accidents and occurrences, foreign to religion, tho' often ascribed to it, and some tempers are more free in the vent of them than others. There is a fury and violence in some people's very devotion, and they think they do not serve God aright, unless they do it in unnatural noisy strains and extacies: but sedateness, and a more quiet behaviour, are more genuine to the pious soul, and a true Christian temper; when an even habitual holiness possesses our hearts, and is visible in our conversation and religious deportment, which is constant and persevering, will not tire, and doth not ebb and flow like our common passions. Besides, we have no reason to fancy or imagine that God requires it at our hands: no raving transports of love or joy can be grateful to a superiour, of whom we stand in awe, or be look'd upon as good breeding or civil address, tho' vented in all the fond expressions and actions of affection and honour.

The most awful civility and good manners, as they betoken the highest respect, are surely due to heaven: and the great Majesty that dwells there, will most certainly be better pleased with a votary, that keeps up his heart and affections to him in a constant and placid

elevation of soul, tho' with *groans that cannot be uttered*, than with one that in some fits of devotion, or when his passions are roused upon some joyful or melancholick occasion, makes more vehement and boisterous applications to him. When God appeared to *Elijah* upon mount *Horeb*, 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. it is said, that *he was not in the great strong wind, that rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord: nor was the Lord in the earthquake, that followed, nor in the fire that came after that; but in the still small voice, and the manifestation was made, and he conferred with the Prophet.*

These cautions I give to put ourselves upon an examination of our *zeal*, when it seems most to please: because some well meaning people, whose passions being naturally more violent, and easier moved than in some others, are apt to shew themselves in greater outward vehemency, and thence set a greater value upon all their religious performances, which after all, may not prove a *zeal of God according to knowledge.*

As the *Jewish Zeal* was frequently unlucky, commonly mistaken, and placed upon the wrong object, and oftentimes very cruel and unmerciful; so truly, in the *New Testament*, where the word in the original is very frequently made use of, 'tis very rarely to be taken in a good sense: our translation, can allow it no other interpretation, than of indignation, envy, a vicious (not virtuous) emulation, all that denotes malice and fury in disposition and practice;

tice; and our Apostle, in his long list of the lusts of the flesh, casts it amongst them as one that is as bad as the rest, *Gal. v. 20.* and elsewhere, as hath been proved in various instances in my former Discourse, advises (*Rom. xiii. 13.*) *to walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying,* in the original Greek, *not in strife and zeal:* and so St. James puts it in as bad company, or rather at the head of it, *Ὁτις ὃς ζήλος καὶ ἐριδία,* where *zeal and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work,* James iii. 16.

So then, as of old, *zeal* was oftener bad than good, oftener rais'd and carried on with ignorance than with true knowledge and discretion; so in matter of fact, we find it now in a great measure to be true. Anger, and resentment, and ill-nature, and prejudice, and many selfish designs and purposes have been the incentives and occasions of a pretended zeal for God and religion: and the louder, and bolder, and more noisy it hath been, it hath met with the better esteem, and been counted the truer with some sort of people in the world.

Let us in all relations be careful to set our judgments right in so momentous a concern: for a true zeal of God *according to knowledge,* is the life and spirit of religion. For as it imports and implies a hearty and sincere concernment for God and his worship, that he may be glorified, and we made capable of that salvation his Son hath purchased, and is freely offered

unto us; so it must keep within the bounds, and move by the doctrines and precepts of that religion which he hath revealed and established.

It will be now time to conclude, as I purposed, with two or three necessary rules or certain methods for the exerting and expending our zeal.

1. It will be safe and proper to vent that eager and four part of our zeal, that flows from gall, from hatred, and anger, upon ourselves, in humiliation and mortification, in taming and bringing down our sinful bodies, by fasting and abstinence, the duties we are now more particularly going to engage in. If we will be raging and rabbling with our zeal, let us fall foul in due humility and self-condemnation upon ourselves first, towards the pulling down of those strong holds of lust and passion, to the rooting out of those disturbers of the peace within us; those traytors against our own souls, that are enemies and hinderers to the truly godly and regular government of ourselves; and we have no greater enemies than those of our own household: here then revenge and resistance are Gospel duties; and the instances of too great hatred and severity are very rare, if ever known. No offence of our neighbour can warrant an exorbitant zeal against him; here we may be assured our zeal is always in the right, for we seldom know worse by any one than we do by ourselves. If we have any zeal of God, and our own souls, let it all be on fire to consume and reduce to ashes every thing in us, that exalteth

alteth itself against his honour, and our own salvation.

Our zeal, if it be good for any thing, will set us upon that great work of repentance, and that with vigour and without delay. *Be zealous therefore, and repent*, is the exhortation to the luke-warm Church of *Laodicea*, Rev. iii. 19. Indulgence of our lusts will make us lazy and inactive in this duty; and a proud and pampered Zealot is a monster in Christianity; but to be humble and penitent, with fear and trembling, as every moment apprehensive of our danger, will keep up our zeal in all watchful postures, and give demonstrative proof, that it is such as is *according to knowledge*: be zealous therefore, and repent.

2. Let the more gentle and loving portion of our zeal be expended upon works of charity, which, in primitive practice, was ever a duty inseparably annexed to the injunctions of fasting and humiliation. If we abound in the most ardent love of God, and Christ Jesus (which raises the truest zeal) here we shall find the most proper vent for it: *in as much as ye have done it to the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*, was our Lord's deputation to the poor to become his receivers. This is rightly to be *zealous of good works*, or the most proper way of testifying our zeal by our works. And this was the primitive emulation, how they may excel one another in such demonstrations of zeal: *I know the forwardness of your mind, and your zeal hath provoked very many,*

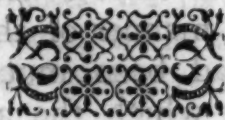
ny, says our Apostle, boasting of the readiness and chearfulness of the *Corinthians* in their liberality, 2 *Epist.* ix. 2. And for *Epaphras* he bears record, that his zeal was great for the brethren, in all instances of love and charity, Col. iv. 13. And indeed all the Disciples, as poor as they were, were ever for highly promoting this noble spirited zeal: as you read, *Acts* xi. 29, 30. Then the Disciples (upon a prophesy of a great dearth) every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa. Which also they did, and sent by the hands of Barnabas and Saul: a more creditable office and title for Barnabas and Saul, to be made bearers of alms to the poor Disciples, than that given by the *Lycaonians* of *Jupiter* and *Mercurius*.

Both these rules or methods will make us impartially and generously zealous, when we will not spare our own flesh, which is ever dear to us, nor our purses, which are sometimes dearer, to give testimony of our zeal, or in the *Jewish* way of speaking, to zeal the zeal of God. I shall only add a third

3. To beg a blessing on the former; which is, the duty of Prayer, and requires the most elevated zeal; because fervency, earnestness, affection, intentness, importunacy and constancy, which are the usual and peculiar indications of zeal, and likewise are the indispensable qualifications of prayer, to make it acceptable and prevalent with God, and of benefit to us: which otherwise is as mere a formality as any external

ternal rite or ceremony in religious worship. Here we have full employment for our zeal, for we are every day wanting, and every day upon the receiving side: and any day's remission of our zeal in this duty, is base and provoking ingratitude; and an intermission, and cessation of God's blessings, is a very just and adequate punishment. Our Apostle (1 Cor. xii. 31.) bids us to *covet earnestly the best gifts*, zeal then is the original; and tells us again, (Gal. iv. 18.) that *it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing*. No good gift, nor any good thing whatsoever, will God withhold from us, if in sincere and persevering humility, and charity, and zealous prayer, we make known our requests to him.

God of his infinite mercy, and through the assistance of his Holy Spirit, enable us to perform these holy duties, with all zeal and perseverance, through Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, and three Persons, be ascribed (as is most due) all honour and adoration, all might, majesty, and dominion, henceforth and for evermore. Amen.



SERMON XIX.

Of Temperance in all Things.

I COR. ix. 25.

And every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things : now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.

THE various and difficult encounters that we meet with in our Christian warfare, are not only dreadfully described to us in holy Scripture; but by experience too we find them so vigorous and close upon us, that no combats amongst men, or other more savage creatures of the world, can bear up to an exact parallel.

The Apostle here writing to the *Corinthians*, chooses to express these contests in agonistical terms, after the manner of the *Grecian* games, exercises that had been much in use in that country, and for which the ambitious combatants made extraordinary preparations to obtain the victory, tho' the prize was no more than

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a withering coronet of flowers, or the more fading blast or shout of popular applause and acclamation.

But what makes the comparison exactly quadrate, the preparatives were the very same in the contests of both sorts, viz. a temperate course of life, dieting themselves, and keeping their bodies in due order; by which as they were more nimble and active in those robust exercises, so in all Christian enterprizes of a similar nature, the methods were as useful, and as absolutely necessary.

A well known and learned Annotator upon the *New Testament* hath pursued the allusion to the utmost extent in very many passages; I will not therefore enlarge upon it any farther, but come to the subject matter of the Text. *Every man that striveth for the mastery, &c.* From which words let us endeavour to descry,

I. The enemy, over whom we must, if we are sound and resolute Christians, get the mastery.

II. The ways and methods of attaining this conquest.

III. The incitements we have from an incorruptible crown, with its preference to all earthly, corruptible attainments.

I. We are to descry the enemy. This easy politicks will suggest to every one that engages

ges in any combat or competition ; that he should first take a view of, or make enquiry into, the strength, cunning, and all the advantages of his adversary. Spies are oftentimes sent out for that purpose, all politick and prudent expedients and devices are used for such a discovery.

Indeed we are surrounded with very many enemies, and such as are very formidable, both as to number and strength. It is true, there are but three usually reckoned up, the devil, the world, and the flesh : but they have each their several legions.

The devil is known to have his legions of evil spirits: and hath not the flesh legions of lusts? and the world, as innumerable objects of allurements? and all in their several posts ever ready for assaults, to set upon us, either by force or stratagem, by battery or undermining. Now, says our Saviour, *Luke xiv. 31. What king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?* The victory is very possible on our side, if we look about us, and add vigilance and consideration to our courage: let us not be affrighted with false alarms, or numbers only; *one may chase a thousand* in this cause, as well as of old in another, *and two put ten thousand to flight.* (Deut. xxxii. 30.) A single Christian may prove hard enough for a whole army of such enemies as these. *I can do all things,* says our Apostle, *thro' Christ*

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Christ that strengthens me, Phil. iv. 13. And surely a true pious soul may as easily get God, and Christ, and his holy Angels on his side, as the flesh can get the devil and the world with all their legions; and then it will soon be decided on which side will go the victory.

But farther, to encourage a Christian soldier in his warfare, the Apostle here describes a fearful combat, yet after all but one enemy appears; and that is self, our own beloved flesh; *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection*; and then there was no fear he should become a *cast-away*, that he should come off with shame in the combat, or fail of the enterprize. So that truly man is the greatest traytor to himself, the bloodiest assassine to his own soul. As to other enemies, they are of his own calling in, he sets open the ports and avenues for their entrance, arms them with all the power and force that they have. For

1. To confound the devil and all his works: as his being is an undoubted truth, generally believed, so we cannot but be sensible of his malice and wiles. Our Apostle elsewhere sets them forth with direful descriptions: *principalities, and powers*, against which we are to wrestle, rulers of darkness, the god of this world, the prince of the air, that worketh in the *hearts of the children of disobedience*.

There is no question but at that time the dominion of Satan was more visible, struggling for the empire, which indeed he had too long possessed against the kingdom of Christ, and
putting

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putting forth all his force at the last battle. But let us not be afraid before we are hurt: he is all this while but a prince of the air; a great arch-angel, but already fallen, condemn'd to chains of darkness: if we unloose him, be it to our own peril: and when by permission, or by our summons, he reigneth most, yet if we barely resist, he cowardly flies. Besides, with all his legions, he cannot make up an equal force against us, since, as the *Psalmist* saith, *The angel of the Lord pitcheth his tents round about those that fear him, to deliver them.* Whilst we fear the Lord, we need not fear the devil. The whole host of heaven will be on our side; and our Apostle assures us that the Angels are *ministering spirits*, sent forth for those that shall be *heirs of salvation*: these are our constant guards; those only unchained and fetched out of their dens by our owns lusts. So that hence certainly is the worst sort of conjuration, the most frequent, if not the diabolical, black art of raising evil spirits: our lusts and passions are furies and fiends, without disturbing of hell. It is our flesh, with all its wandering appetites, its inordinate roving desires, that forrageth it about, that wandereth up and down the universe seeking what it may devour; all that can be made a prey to its tearing ambition, to its wanton lusts, to its voracious avarice. Thus, as *Michael the arch-angel, contending with the devil, durst not bring against him a railing accusation*, says St. *Jude*, ver. 9. so we ought not to lay to his charge more than belongs to him.

Besides,

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Besides, mistaking of our enemy may prove of mischievous consequence, by turning off our eyes and efforts from an home-bred, and worst adversary, who destroys us by civil broils within our own borders, and so we spend our strength against a foreign, and sometimes but a supposed enemy: all the while making but *εἰσαμαχία*, or as our Apostle phraseth it in the next *verse* to the text, *a beating the air*. As thus we lay this evil spirit, if we do but keep ourselves within the circle of order and decorum, that is, *temperance in all things*; so

2. The world itself is no such formidable enemy, but a Christian may attain to the conquest of it; let us examine then where its strength lies: of itself it is but a passive lump, modified by different contexture, or painted into various shapes and objects, not tempting in themselves, but made so by our own lustful appetites and imaginations, and raised into a price and value by our own luxuriant fancies. They send forth no attractive effluvia to draw us, but our senses fetch them in: so then the mischief and the act of temptation is from ourselves. Pure nature too, as it is supplied with little, and what is ready at hand, so of itself it would put us but upon necessities: the superfluities are craved by our own vitiated tempers and desires; and so long as we can never hold them for ever, neither can they preserve us from any common infelicity, such as pain, diseases, melancholy, the infirmities of constitution, and be sure not from death; it
must

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must be an easy piece of self-denial, in a rational and wise man, to despise them.

The most natural and first rudiment of philosophy taught men to count the world a contemptible enemy, and of easy conquest; and yet we Christians look upon it as if we had the task of *Alexander* or *Cæsar*. *Be of good cheer*, says the Captain of our salvation, *John* xvi. 33. *I have overcome the world*. The conquest is already made, and we are sharers in it: for Christianity hath infinitely more noble proposals and prizes, that upon prospect of them we cannot but trample the world under our feet: *whosoever is born of God overcometh the world*, even our faith; for who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? if Christ hath promised us a kingdom, and we believe in his promises, the glories of the world must necessarily lose their inviting allurements and charms, or we renounce our faith. A light and temporary crown can bear no proportion to an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*.

And if we yet still frame to ourselves more dismal enemies, persecutions from the powers of the world, or whatsoever evils and punishments befall good men in this life, which in Scripture are called *temptations*, as *1 Cor.* x. 13. because they are tryals and certain discouragements, to draw us from the practice of virtue and holiness: here too, if we behave ourselves as we ought, we have a promise of safeguard and protection. *God is faithful, who will*

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will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.

Even our faith, if it stand right and be sound, will send in sufficient supplies against this enmity; it is our own trembling flesh (which is ever against us) that makes them terrible; whereas our Christianity must own them to be seasonable tryals and chastisements, and they may happily help us forwards to our great end, the attainment of this incorruptible crown.

Thus it is apparent we have but one original enemy, that is considerable, ourselves, to our shame be it spoken; our beloved flesh and blood, which we seem to cherish for that purpose: the other are foreign enemies indeed that are brought in, upon our disorders at home, (as the lusts and provocations of the *Israelites* called in the *Philistines*) but could do us but little mischief, were we not first and deepest in the plot, to bring about our own destruction. A civil war in a nation is commonly more dreadful and calamitous, than a foreign invasion; but both together seldom fail of bringing about a fatal and total ruin. If we examine all the particular sins of our lives, how heinous soever, we shall find the act is not more our own, than the temptation; the guilt is wholly so, as well as the transgression: all is transacted within ourselves, and every circumstance of aggravation is to be laid to our own charge. If we take an account of all our habits and customs to evil, they are ever begun, continued,

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ed, and carried on by ourselves; and so it is most notorious, that all evil of punishment, which is the consequence of sin, is from ourselves: according to a *Latin* proverb, *Quisque suæ fortunæ faber*: we are the laborious hammerers out of our own misfortunes. We suffer no wrecks but from our own tempestuous minds, and all is the product of sin: as St. *James* tells us, i. 15. *When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* So that thus, tho' we have the most powerful enemy, this domestick traytor, but pretended self-lover, yet is it still but a single combat; the spirit against the flesh; the understanding against the brutish lusts and passions; and by the right of creation, the dominion belongs to reason over the beast. *Si spiritus carne fortior, quia generosior, nostra culpa infirmiora sectamur,* says *Tertullian*. 'If the spirit be stronger than the flesh, because more generous or of truer courage, it is our own fault if we take part with the weaker side'. In the second place then

II. Let us enquire into the ways and methods how we may retrieve this mastery. The means and method chiefly consist in a discipline usual in all enterprizes that require readiness and resolution of mind, and vigour of body, that is, *to be temperate in all things*, to abstain from what will weaken and enfeeble us. To conquer that part of our humanity, so troublesome to our peace, so reluctant to virtue, and to that felicity we may be capable of in this life, there are, no doubt,

doubt, many expedients and advantages; as a happy frame and constitution of body, good education, good company and example, industry and discretion, strong and generous resolutions, and many other happy circumstances of a man's life and station in the world: but certainly nothing so constant and successful, both for defence and opposition, as an habitual temperance. This keeps the whole man in such a regular frame and temper, that he becomes proof against all temptation. Now this method of living, our Christianity calls *mortification*; not that the members of the body, or the reasonable faculties and dispositions of the soul, are thereby deadned (unless happily dead unto sin), but more lively and vigorous for all the actions of wisdom, and prudent management of our affairs, as well as for the exercises of virtue and holiness: it is a help to nature as well as to religion. And this is not solely a Christian prescription, but as early as ever virtue and philosophy were in the world. As virtue is founded in resistance, *i. e.* opposition to our lusts and passions, which makes mortification to be a duty of the same date with the practice of virtue itself. The *Stoicks* have as high flights upon this subject as any Christian *Anchoret* whatsoever: and *Socrates* was as great an example, who own'd in himself a propensity to the most beastly and even unnatural lusts; but he could master himself, resolute abstinence and mortification were his cure. And the followers of *Epicurus* talk great things too of

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their master's of abstinence: for tho' he founded all happiness in the pleasures of this life, yet he was a cleanly voluptuary, maintaining that felicity consisted in the moderate use of those pleasures, and that sensuality was inconsistent both with philosophy and an happy life: which agrees with *Solomon's* notion of pleasure, which consisteth in the practice of wisdom or religion, *Whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace.*

Our Saviour calls it by a very proper and comprehensive name, which is, *self-denial*; and makes it the condition of being his Disciple, and surely consequently of being saved by him, *Luke ix. 23. And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.* Now as it is necessarily implied in the practice of virtue, to deny ourselves the contrary inclinations, however more acceptable to our natural concupiscence; so it is no more than what we contentedly, and even strive to do in the obtaining of our sensual and worldly ends. Doth not covetousness shut a man up from many innocent enjoyments, and deny him the fulfilling his lusts, to fill up his treasures? ambition puts a man upon a thousand instances of self-denial; of ease, sleep, retirement, security, the love of those about him, and a quiet conscience, and all to bring about his haughty designs. Our common health oftentimes puts us upon as many: how many, and irksome days are spent in chamber and bed-confinement, in physick and filthy

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filthy potions, and a spare and almost starving diet, in a very cruel sort of temperance, and the most rigid mortification? and all for the regaining of health, which probably may have been impaired by sin, and which perhaps may prove of as short duration, as the use of the severe remedy.

Nay, the voluptuary must mortify and deny himself; sacrifice health, fame, his money, and quit many innocent and harmless enjoyments, to wallow in one single sensuality; strangle all the pleasures that are about him, that one beloved above the rest may reign alone; that the choicer mistress of his lusts may quietly enjoy the empire. Thus the children of the flesh, as well as of the world, are in their generation wiser *than the children of light*. They will tread the rugged paths that would lead them to virtue, to be more exquisitely vicious, or to gain their point, tho' a mean or vile one: whilst dull Christians think it too much to mortify for a crown of glory; but are intercepted in the *race that is set before them*, to take up the least trifle of gain or pleasure, that is thrown in their way, because they cannot deny themselves.

But we may observe, besides mortification before-hand, which you see in many instances is the lot of the wicked in their pursuits, as well as the duty of righteous men; there is a consequent mortification that is more certain and calamitous; either in the inward grievances of the mind, or the outward complaints of the body, or commonly both, which seldom

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fail to follow the commission of very many sins, but never the practice of virtue and piety, strict righteousness, and the exercise of a good conscience; which are ever attended with the highest joy and consolation.

Thus far of the reasonableness of this duty of mortification or self-denial; which as to its nature is so comprehensive as to include no less than a sacrificing of all that stands in competition with, or obstruction to, our religion, which must always be the ascendent design. We must not only renounce what is sinful, but even what we have a right to, or may otherwise innocently enjoy, if thereby our lusts and passions will be carried away in a wrong course. Nay, we must rise to a strain above nature, rather than the purposes of religion should be let and hindered, or made void. *An eye is to be pulled out, an hand to be cut off*, rather than they should offend or cause us to offend, that is, be the instruments or occasions of evil: and says our Lord again, *If any man come to me, and hateth not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters: yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*, Luke xiv. 26. What a hard saying, to hate father and mother, all nearest and dearest relatives, and one's own life too, when they stand in the way against God's honour, and our eternal salvation! so there is nothing we can name, that relates to the world and the flesh, but must veil to our religion.

But to these high duties of renunciation, we are

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are only called, upon extraordinary and very rare occasions, that the practice of religion may still be observed as the superiour interest. The commands ordinarily run only against sin, and for the preservation of ourselves in due order and temper, both of body and mind: and herein our well-being and happiness in this life is jointly consulted, by all the rules and precepts of mortification and self-denial, together with the everlasting salvation of our souls. That we may aspire to those things which are above, and are most worthy of our pursuit, our Apostle gives forth the rule, *Col. iii. 5, 6. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.* So likewise he tells us, *Titus ii. 11, 12, That the grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* And judge then, whether this mortification would not be for our better ease and lasting enjoyment in this present life, as well as for our future and everlasting enjoyment and advancement in that which is to come.

Thus far of this duty in general; because the Text prescribes *temperance in all things*: but the time directs us to that particular temperance by *fasting*; and without enlarging upon the practice of this duty, either in the *Jewish* or *Chris-*

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tian Church, we will only consider the obligation to it. Either as

1. Enjoined by our religion. Or,
2. As useful in its own nature and practice, to get the mastery in the contest we are now engaged in.

1. As to the obligations we have for it from our religion. We cannot maintain, that it is enjoined for any intrinſick good in its own performance, but as useful to put us into a virtuous and religious frame both of body and mind, to make us ſteadfaſt and perfevering in good actions, and enable us to reſiſt temptation, as it is of uſe for ſtudy, for counſel, and all ſerious employment. Altho' it is to be acknowledged too, that it is of itſelf a good indication of holineſs, when we will reſtrain our craving appetites for the ſervice of God and the health of our ſouls. It was the groſs ſuperſtition of the *Phariſees* amongſt the *Jews*, and of ſome of their ſucceſſors or imitators in the Chriſtian Church, to lay ſo much ſtreſs upon the *opus operatum*, or the bare performance of the duty without any farther relation; whereas it is only a ſacred duty in order to holineſs. For as God doth not delight to *grieve the children of men*, ſo doth he not enjoin them penance purely to macerate themſelves, and afflict their own bodies, to look ghawly and diſfigure their countenances. A clean and empty carcaſe cannot be a more acceptable ſacrifice to him, than one that is full and well-liking: for he doth not grudge us a ſupply out of that abundance,
he

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he hath for that end, that is, for our sufficiency and lawful enjoyment, shower'd down upon us. And as to ourselves, our mortified Apostle grants, that *no man yet ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it and cherisheth it: and that bodily exercise profiteth little: and that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost:* so that there can be no obligation for it, either from nature or religion, purely for its own sake. For if there had, then Christ would not have dispensed with it in his Disciples, as it appears he did, by that answer he made to the Disciples of *John*, who said unto him, *Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy Disciples fast not? and Jesus said to them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast,* Matt. ix. 14, 15.

The presence of so good a guardian might secure them, but when he was gone, they must ward themselves: plain enough intimating a necessity of the duty, *viz.* that the powerful lusts of the flesh can only be restrained either by the presence and oversight of so watchful a master, or else we must be obliged to keep them under ourselves by this method of mortification: and hence then we have a sufficient warrant for a divine positive institution, founded upon that

2. Consideration, As useful in is nature and practice, to get the mastery in the contest we are now engaged in. As,

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1. It is the best disposition for humility, and that is almost the sole disposition for religion: *I humbled my soul with fasting*, says the Psalmist: (Psal. xlv. 13.) Fulness and forgetfulness are inseparable, haughtiness and luxury are seldom parted. *Jeshurun* (Deut. xxxii. 15.) *waxed fat, and kicked, then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.*

2. It is the likeliest disposition to bring a man to a self-examination, to make enquiry into his own worth, which satiety makes him over-look or over-value: to know himself and make a true estimate of all his actions: it quickens his apprehensions, keeps his reason more unprejudiced, and from ill impressions: keeps his conscience tender and fearful of evil, and qualifies him for the spirit of God: *for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*

3. Notwithstanding this disposition to humility, courage in good and honourable actions, constancy and resolution in our whole behaviour, are the more certain effects of sobriety and temperance. We find by experience, that whilst we keep our bodies in a regular temper, then are we fixed and steady in our purposes, but oft as we launch out into intemperance, change and inconstancy usually follow: our understandings, wills, and all our faculties are heated into disregard and defiance of what is good and prudent; and we commonly become too great and high-flown to mind the concerns of religion.

Now

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Now Fasting would be but an indifferent thing, or may be as well let alone, if a man, with constant satiety and self-indulgence, could be fatned into good manners and good deeds, could be as generously disposed to works of charity, to patience and humility, to a sound zeal and the fear of God, to resolution in virtue and holiness; as he is oftentimes thereby emboldened in atheistical discourses, in blasphemy, in lewd actions, and all the impudence of impiety: or if with that fulness he were better fortified to resist temptation, conquer his lusts, moderate his passions; as he is much more disposed to revile, quarrel, revenge, murder, and the like; then intemperance, gluttony, and drunkenness would carry the precedence to sobriety itself. But experience tells us, and that in all tempers, that satiety makes men bold and venturous in all manner of vice; but to be steady in virtue and piety we must keep up a constant government over those appetites.

Be sober, be vigilant, says St. Peter, *because your adversary the devil walketh about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.* Here sobriety with vigilance makes the boldest champion against Satan himself. It is a false courage and only for a push, that is raised by intemperance; that which is lasting must be founded upon a constant and persevering sobriety. This we may be assured, is the most sovereign expedient, tho' we cannot pronounce it infallible: other holy exercises must accompany it, or otherwise it may prove Pharisaical. Malice, ambition,

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ambition, and covetousness too often couch under a certain mortification; these are devils hardly cast out even by prayer and fasting. A meagre face and aspect is oftentimes as true an indication of envy and worldly cares, as it can be of fasting; *He came neither eating nor drinking, and hath a devil*, is not always a false conclusion; for it was matter of truth on the objector's side.

It is well known, that the most hellish designs have been carried on by the blasphemous wheedles of fastings and filthy humiliations: and the great God that dwells in heaven, hath been shamefully mocked, both with them, and also with the glosing cant of *Te Deums*, and general thanksgivings: so that tho' fastings and thanksgivings, and devouring, are contradictions, and cannot meet in a point of true devotion; yet, as of old, the first was usually made a preparative for the second; so still among hypocrites, that is, religious knaves, do they continue to follow close one upon the other.

Fasting therefore (I say) must be attended not only with all religious exercises, even an habitual course of piety; but also with all designs and actions of honour and honesty, of fairness and faithfulness, and of humanity and good nature; particularly that generous duty of charity or alms-giving was ever inseparable from primitive fasting; that the spiritual advantages may be purely ours, whilst the temporal, or what is saved and set by, by this abstinence, is of right the portion of the poor.

Now

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Now as it is a duty thus reasonable and profitable, so we must hence infer, it is at all times obliging. I mean the practice of temperance: the Church could not but set apart distinct times for fasting and humiliation, and this preceding the *Passion* and *Resurrection* of our Lord, was upon good reason and authority, ordained as most suitable and proper. But certainly an habitual temperance is the Gospel duty and of absolute necessity, if we let loose the reins, the beast (as *Hilarion*, * a great example of fasting, calls his body) will kick and fling, and become ungovernable. We must take up our cross *daily*, is the command, we must be *temperate in all things*, and at all times.

Our Saviour had a body over which a divinity presided, and he might venture upon the freedom of conversation, as it was laid to his charge, without falling into a snare: and yet he submitted to all the severities of fasting, to keep that humanity in a sinless estate, or if that needed not, at least for example-sake to his followers; for which end was his *quadragesimal* fast, altho' beyond all human imitation, in full and exact practice.

The whole exercise of *John* the Baptist, was *preaching repentance*, and putting it in practice by a whole life of penance and fasting, as the only preparatives for the kingdom of Christ, and all the blessings of the Gospel. The greatest character the Angel could give at his birth was, *that he should be great in the sight of the Lord*,

* *Mi Ajelle*, &c.

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Lord, and should drink neither wine nor strong drink; a certain prognostick that he should be a great man; a great MAN indeed! he should not *drink*; and thereby qualified for an heavenly embassy: and to be the fore-runner of the world's Saviour, in nothing little or unworthy, but in comparison to the Son of God.

Our Apostle *St. Paul* doth not only frequently enjoin this duty, but was himself also in *fastings often*: and this was the characteristick note of the Disciples and Apostles: *In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in watchings, in fastings,* (2 Cor. vi. 4. and xi. 27.) And the primitive Christians were generally such asceticks in this instance of fasting, that the ecclesiastical history is full of wonderful narratives of their prodigious mortifications, and with the most happy success to those that put them in practice, for the advancing of a persevering, and very exemplary holiness and virtue, as I might give innumerable instances. But surely we have incitement sufficient from *the incorruptible crown*, proposed in the last part of the Text: now they do it for *a corruptible crown*, we *an incorruptible*. By a *crown*, without farther enlarging upon the metaphor, is meant, all that is desirable in this world or that which is to come. Now there was an equality only in the preparatives for those *Isthmian* or *Nemean* games, and for Christian exercises; but there is an infinite transcendency in the heavenly reward. You have heard already, not only that this *temperance in all things* was of absolute necessity in these

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these *Grecian* contests, but also that a certain sort of mortification precedes or attends all the designs of the world, and even those that are sensual. Now it looks like the design of heaven in the frame of man, in sending him with a rational and immortal soul, into such an untoward habitation as a body of flesh, to put him upon a management that requires the exercise of all virtues that will make him great and glorious, that so by quitting himself wisely and faithfully in such a province, he may be advanced to a higher station; and no less than *an everlasting crown of glory* is the prize.

This may surely be sufficient to excite our most soaring ambition; tho' by faith only we have a prospect of, or an eye to this recompence of reward: for even in our greatest designs of the world, we move not with an absolute security, but upon a belief that by such and such means we may carry them thorough, and attain our end. Our Apostle (2 Cor. iv. 17.) calls it *an exceeding and eternal weight of glory*: and as tho' he had been at a loss to set it forth, describes it by negatives: (1 Cor. ii. 9.) *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entred into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* Upon which words I may have occasion next to discourse, which to prevent being too tedious and tiresome at this time, will serve for a fuller conclusion upon this subject.

God of his infinite mercy incite and animate us with his Holy Spirit, in this glorious pursuit,
that

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that having fought the good fight and finished our course, and kept the faith, we may obtain this incorruptible crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give at that great day, when he cometh in his glory with his Holy Angels, to all them that love his appearing: this we beg for the sake and through the merits of Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Saviour, to whom, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, and three Persons, be ascribed all honour, might, majesty, and adoration, now and for evermore. Amen.



SER-

SERMON XX.

The Crown of Bliss and Glory.

I COR. ii. 9.

*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen,
nor ear heard, neither have entered in-
to the heart of man, the things which
God hath prepared for them that love
him.*

AS it is written implies a sacred quotation, a reference to some place in the Holy Scriptures, which were then those of the *Old Testament* only: and the marginal note directs to *Isaiah lxiv. 4.* For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. And the margin there sends you farther back to *Psalms xxxi. 19.* where holy David is raised into a like rapturous expression: O! how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

What

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What ever glorious blessings these holy Prophets aimed at, in this admiring language, is not material to determine; the words by the Apostle are fitly accommodated to those transcendent ones of the Gospel. Inspired men of old, had, no doubt of it, a view of an heavenly *Canaan*; but it was no express article of faith among the people, nor their * rulers, who doated altogether on earthly promises, and in the main terminated their hopes and expectations in the possessions of this life: altho' *Grotius* † upon the Text tells us, *the Rabbins expounded these words in the mystical, or secret sense, as relating to another life.* And therefore in respect to him, that is, the great Author and finisher of our salvation, and hath brought *life and immortality to light*, and in respect to this immense reward of glory now revealed and promised by him, is it that our Apostle saith in the two verses preceding the Text: *We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory:* be sure not, their own welfare and ambition (which they ever consulted) would have pleaded in his cause, who brought them such glad tidings of life and salvation; such as *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive, even the things which*

* *John vii. 48.* † *V. Gr. in loc. Quæ verba etiam Rabbini de vita altera exponunt sensu arcaniore.*

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which God hath prepared for them that love him. From which description let us take a view as far as we are able,

- I. Of those great things that are prepared for lovers, for them that love God, and the Lord Jesus Christ: such as *eye hath not seen, &c.*
- II. Of the qualification for those transcendent blessings, which is the loving of God. And,
- III. Of the assurances we have in the promises of such infinite glory.

I. We are to take a view of those great things, &c. *A crown of righteousness and glory, incorruptible and never fading,* is the lowest and most common metaphor, that is made use of to set forth the grandeur of this heavenly kingdom, and yet by a *crown* is meant all that is desirable and great in this world, and bears up the nearest in resemblance to the glories of the next.

It is a noble acquisition: a crown, and to be attained by such righteous means. *Si violandum est jus, regnandi causa violandum est,* says the politick Historian, *If any thing can warrant, or alleviate the violation of right, it must be to get a kingdom:* but here by keeping strictly to the laws of righteousness, to all the placid rules of morality, and the gentle precepts of the Gospel, of *meekness and lowliness,* we shall get a

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crown. Tho' should we be put upon the greatest sufferings and hardships in the attainment, our Apostle assures us, (*Rom. viii. 18.*) they would *not be worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* But it is stinting our eternal joys, and setting bounds to this infinite felicity, to encompass all in a crown. And therefore our Apostle endeavours to raise his descriptions (*2 Cor. iv. 17.*) higher, and calls it *an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory*; nothing of lightness in it, as in the vanities of the world, and in all the glories here below, and nothing of that pressing and uneasy weight that is unseparable from all earthly crowns.

But higher still, in the Text, is he raised into admiration and astonishment at this great glory, and throws aside all earthly comparisons, like the Deity, and is infinite and incomprehensible; it could only by negatives be described. Tho' he could glory in great visions and revelations of the Lord, yet was he admitted no farther into this mystery, and the Holy Ghost would allow no farther knowledge and utterance in this glorious article. Nay, tho' he had been *caught up to the third heaven*, and was admitted *into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter*, as you read *2 Cor. xii. 4.* yet all was silence and profound amazement; he knew not whether *in the body or out of the body*: the glories were all too big for his capacities, and he could bring no other relation, or account of things from those regions of bliss, than *that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,*

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heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. And tho' no farther discovery be made of this happiness, this may surely be enough to gratify man, as that it is beyond all the most pleasing objects of those two senses ; nay, tho' we call in all the powers of imagination to assist and enliven those and our other senses.

1. *Eye hath not seen.*--If with our Saviour, even in the most hungering and most longing condition, we were set upon the highest mountain of the world, to take a view of all its greatness and riches, and were offered the entire inheritance of them by the right donor, they must prove short of satisfaction to every righteous soul, in comparison to this fulfilling joy, this immense everlasting possession of glory. All are mere landskape and shadow to this substance of blessedness, this very essence of infinite enjoyment. *Solomon* tells us, *Eccles. i. 8. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with bearing,* that is, as to all the objects of this world ; but in the next, those senses shall be improved into the most refined capacities: our eyes, without dazling or weariness, shall be able to pierce into all the celestial objects of delight, shall be ever enravished, but never satiated with infinite illustrious prospects: and the ears, without any grating reluctance, shall be charmed with eternal praises and hallelujahs. Which,

2. As yet, *ear hath not heard*: for it is beyond all the relations of blifs that ever came to the notice of mankind, or men could ever project.

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The Poets could fancy and devise nothing beyond an *Elizium* to gratify their senses: and the *Turks* only the filthy raptures of carnal pleasures, the repetition of wordly and fleshly enjoyments. But there is a great gulf fixed betwixt the pleasures and possessions of this world, and the next; and a man may as well hope his lusts and vices into heaven, as his present gratifications. For these are all gross, and only delightful to carnal bodies, *whereas flesh and blood cannot inherit our kingdom of bliss*; we must all be changed first: both soul and body must be wonderfully refined, before they can be qualified to inherit such divine mansions of brightness and felicity; where *the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father*, saith our Lord, *Matt. xiii. 43.* and thereupon alarms them with this expression, sounding so agreeably to that in my Text, *Who hath ears to hear let him hear.* But,

3. Higher yet---*It never entered into the heart of man to conceive such joys.* And yet in the conceptions of a man's heart there is a boundless extent; the usual operations of which are either *imagination*, or *desire*, and to them we may almost ascribe an infinity: for, *First*, imagination or thought is of a vast and unlimited reach; in a moment of time it can run thorough the whole world, and were there a thousand more, a man may trace them thorough and thorough, and encompass all their delights and glories in his imagination. But here thought itself is swallowed up, where

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where *death is swallowed up in victory, and mortality is swallowed up of life*, as our Apostle (1 Cor. xv. 54. 2 Cor. v. 4.) expresses it, both in relation to the resurrection and immortal glory.

Secondly, As thus thought and imagination have so vast a reach, so likewise the desires of our hearts are as extensive; we know by experience they are boundless: the world could yet never satisfy them: if we could get it in possession, both ambition and covetousness, the two greedy worms of the soul, would still be desiring, creeping, and craving after more. There was a notorious instance in the first ambitious Conqueror of the world (as he was said to be), he wanted to conquer more: and every covetous and ambitious man is his sordid imitator; and would (if it were in his power) become a more insatiable devourer. This world is scanty and insufficient for our boundless and endless desires: it is the property then of heavenly joy, glory, and possessions alone, to give them satisfaction; *In thy presence, O Lord, says King David, is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore*, Psalm xvi. 11. These are such as give life as well as delight, raise desire and fill it: they are such as never languish, decay, or cloy; and the soul is qualified to bear up, without remission, to the heavenly and infinite enjoyment.

Imagine but what the mind may enjoy in tranquillity, when eased of all the grievances and cumbrances of the flesh; when it is in the immediate presence of God, and hath eyes fit-

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ted to behold him : when it is everlastingly employed, and every moment enravished in the contemplation, and love, and imitation of his divine perfections : then have you some faint resemblance of this immortal bliss and glory, and yet still in an infinity of degrees is it beyond all that imagination. I have a just claim to your pardon, if I can discourse no fuller upon what is incomprehensible.

If any thing in this world can give a taste or antepast of these heavenly joys, it must be sought among the sweet delights of an holy and virtuous life. That serenity and cheerfulness of mind, that peace and quiet of conscience, placid and regular government over our lusts and passions, which are to be acquired by our holy religion, and are kept up in life and vigour, by our own ardent and enravishing love of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, as they are the truest and most necessary preparatives for the celestial conversation ; so do they give us the most exact and typical idea and resemblance of these unconceivable, and unexpressible glorious things, that *are prepared for them that love God ; Such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man :* and ought therefore ever to pray with our holy Apostle, *Ephes. iii. 17, 18, 19. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with the fulness of God.* And so I come to the

II. Se-

II. Second general head, the great qualification in the Text for these transcendent blessings, which is our *love of God*. All the glories I have endeavoured to display before you, are the noble achievements of love: in this, tho' but a passion, God delights more in than the products of our reason and understandings. This passion, when directed to God, can never exceed its bounds, or rather itself desires to have none; it would be infinite, like its object, and like its reward, in all the endearing and delightful tokens of affection, that it might bear up to the commandment (*Deut. vi. 5. Matt. xxii. 37. Mark xii. 30. Luke x. 27.*) which runs as high as expression can raise it. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;* that is to say, with the fullest exertion of all the powers and faculties both of soul and body; therefore no more need to be required than love; because a necessary consequence of such love must be an entire obedience to his commands, and in this sense, or relation, may it be said to be *a fulfilling of the law*.

It is true, in Scriptures too, obedience is often-times made the consequence of faith and divine knowledge; and that upon a very rational way of arguing: for it looks like an impossible thing, to believe, and what is higher than that, absolutely to know, or to be thoroughly convinced of, all the truths contained in the Gospel, relating to God and Christ Jesus, and

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to everlasting life and death, promises and threats; and not by the common principles of nature, self-love, and preservation, to fear and obey that God, that can, and will everlastingly save or destroy. And yet, in matter of fact, we find that this is no demonstrable consequence, but proves often faith and science falsely so called. Men know and believe, and have pretended great intimacy and familiarity, crying, *Lord! Lord!* yet have not done the *will of their heavenly Father*. Thus *faith and knowledge*, seated in the superiour faculty of the reason and understanding, must vail to *Love*, tho' moving in a lower sphere the sensitive soul; as it is of the strongest influence, and gives power and activity to all virtues and graces: and all faith is ineffectual, but what, according to *St. Paul's* language, *worketh by love*. Gal. v. 6.

Fear is another passion of great power and sway. And the *fear of God* is often taken for the whole of our Religion, Law, and Gospel: and obedience to the commandments of God ought to be the regular consequence of our fear as well as of our love; yet still is not so entire and cordial, nor of such efficacy and power as love. Out of fear indeed we may obey as long as the eye of our superiour is over us, or his punishments and judgments look threatening towards us: and sometimes too we venture his displeasure, and offend, in hopes he will not be extreme, *to mark what we shall do amiss*: and besides he that fears only, is too apt to wish that he that makes him to fear, or
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keeps him in such awe, were quite extinct or out of his way. As the *Atheist* rather wishes than truly believes there is no God.

But now our lover is only happy in the contemplation and enjoyment of his beloved and adorable Creator and Redeemer. Could he believe him absent or not observing, could he offend in privacy or with impunity; were these securities possible; yet still would he keep up his obedience to the height, he cannot violate his love: all sin is *enmity to God*; and tho' he should not punish it, yet a true lover of God would be an irreconcilable enemy to sin.

The great work of repentance, be sure the right performance of it, is almost wholly transacted by the powers of this *love*. Sin is immediately hated and renounced, as soon as ever we come to love God. And God upon the pledge and assurance of love, as immediately signs the pardon, trusting to the loving penitent for farther testimonials of his sorrow and conversion, which he cannot but pay, so long as he keeps up to his *love*. Therefore our Saviour in a *Pharisee's* house, and in defiance to that vile generation of vipers, pronounces immediate *absolution* upon a woman that had been a very signal *sinner*; and that upon the testimony she had given of her *love*, above all the company that were then entertaining him: *She brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed*

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ted them with the ointment, as you have the relation, Luke vii. 37, 38. Tho' the act and the charge were invidiously both resented and represented by the Pharisees, yet Christ knew the affection of her heart, and so was pleased with the outward ceremony, and said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven, and gives this for a reason, if they could have been satisfied: Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little, vers. 47, 48. So then if you would call religion by one most comprehensive name, let it be that of Love. All other graces and dispositions will fall in, as never failing attendants upon love. A reverential fear must be ever inseparable from it: we cannot but dread the displeasure of him whom we truly love. And faith and knowledge must be supposed and implied, for we cannot love but whom (and as) we believe and know.

The foundation of God's worship was laid in love: the covenant of grace was a covenant of love; For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life, John iii. 16. And so the same Evangelist, in his first Epistle, iv. 9, 10. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him: herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. He was first in love; and we love him, because he first loved

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loved us, vers. 19. He loved us, to incite our love; and all the return that he requires for his infinite love, is that we should love again, knowing that our love would enforce us to stand to all the conditions of his grace and love. Therefore is our Saviour so zealous for promoting mutual love, and calling out for all the testimonials of it on our side: not that we can thereby contribute to his happiness or glory; that was ever infinite, and needeth no addition; but all the advantage and blessedness rebounds back on ourselves. Loving of God will prove the truest self-love, because it will keep us up to the strictest rules of virtue and holiness, the indispensable conditions of our own salvation, John xiv. 15. If ye love me, keep my commandments, and verse 21. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him: and verse 23. If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. St. John pursues the same argument in his first Epistle, v. 3. and makes entire obedience to be the consequence of true love: For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous, as be sure they cannot be to a true lover.

Love is too large a subject to be discoursed out, or fully, in so narrow a compass of time: all that I would have concluded from what hath already been said, are these following positions.

1. That

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1. That our love to God is but a due return for his infinite love to us. *Ingratitude*, as the *Moralists* have observed, seldom meets with its due punishment in this life, that is, from secular justice: because its cases being so various cannot be brought under human cognizance, but is therefore, as they have remarked, reserved for the greater vengeance of the next world. Few men will own or confess ingratitude, it is so foul a charge: but God can judge and will decide the matter. Now all the acts of ingratitude that ever past betwixt men, with all the worst circumstances of aggravation, since the beginning of the world, cannot amount to our baseness and vile unworthiness, if we do not love God.

2. If we do love God, as we cannot but profess, we are necessarily obliged to give substantial proofs of our love, by our obedience and conformity to all his commandments; God requires it, and it is impossible for true love to dispense with it. All disobedience is enmity to him, or rebellion against him, and must be therefore constructive hatred.

3. That if our love to God can thus attest and prove itself (as we ourselves disregard all professions without manifest and actual tokens of love) then by promise is it entitled to all the glorious rewards in the Text, *Such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, &c.*

4. We may conclude, the denunciation and curse is as certain, as the promise and blessing, if we do not love God and keep his commandments.

ments. Our Apostle St. *Paul* hath in this *Epist.* (1 *Cor.* xvi. 22.) one thundering curse against that ingrateful wretch that dares not to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and is said to be the third and highest degree of *Jewish* execrations: *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maran-atha:* whatsoever is the import of such a curse, he deserves ten thousand more that loveth not God, and his Son Jesus, that was sent into the world to ingratiate himself with us, to take our nature upon him, that he may be one with us, and dye for us, and thereby save us from everlasting death, the dreadful completion of all the curses and miseries that were denounced and inflicted upon rebellious angels, men, and devils.

Now, since such infinite rewards of felicity and glory are offered for the purchase of our love, and for our obedience, the genuine effect of that love, it is but adequate justice, that our hatred of God, (or what is constructively such, or the proof of it from our rebellions against his laws) should be punish'd with infinite, and the most exquisite torments: to which we may apply the same words as the reverse of the Text (but surely not without trembling) such as *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive, even the dreadful things that God hath prepared for them that hate him.* We have the very same assurances of this great terror of the Lord, as we have of his glorious promises. And this brings me to the last consideration that arises from the words of the Text, *viz.*

III. What

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III. What assurances we have in this promise of infinite glory, *such as eye hath not seen*, &c. for which I have only time to tell you the common topicks of proof, and so leave it to your own reason to improve them and argue them out.

In short then, we have all the assurances that we have for the proof of our religion in general, for the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and all divine revelation; if it be true that therein is contained the will of God; these are then the most assured rewards of our love and obedience.

We have all too that we can say for those almighty wonders, which, as to matter of fact, were done as sure as ever any thing was done in the world, and all to confirm and establish a religion that enjoins the practice of the strictest virtue, according to the highest obligations of morality and the law of nature: and commands too the greatest purity and holiness most suitable to the nature and essence, and most proper for the adoration of the supreme being, the true God.

All the assurances we likewise have, that he hath given us a law to govern us in our consciences, and in those faculties, and the exercise of them, that are out of the reach of human jurisdiction; that adequate rewards of virtue and goodness are not received in this life, surely then must be reserved for another; and so then we have all the arguments for these great promises

mises that we have for the immortality of the soul; and that certainly then there must be two different estates in the next life, and that virtue and piety must lay claim to the best, as more acceptable to a just and righteous God, and as they commonly, by the order or permission of his best judging providence, meet with the worse share in this present world.

But whatever comes on it, there is something of greatness, even in failing in great and commendable enterprizes, if no miscarriage or mismanagement can be charged upon us. If we miss the crown, we shall quit ourselves like men, in the bravery of good and virtuous life, in the noble conquest of our lusts and passions, those vexatious and disgraceful disturbers of our human estates. But we have the fairest prospect of a crown, and God is faithful, who hath promised, as well as of almighty sufficiency to perform, and make myriads of saints to be crowned heads.

For to obviate the objection of pride in these high pretences to a crown of glory, in the low, meek, and humble professors of Christianity and virtue (cast upon us by *Atheists* and *Epicureans*) that it is mere conceit and credulity that raiseth up to the hopes and expectations of such glorious things, *which eye hath not seen*, &c. Why! We have a Sayiour and redeemer, one that hath bought and dearly paid for this crown of glory: so then we have all the assurances too to make good these promises, that we have, that Christ Jesus the Son of God came into
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the flesh, and laid down his life for us, to expiate our guilt, and take off our unworthiness, to cover all our iniquities, and heal all our diseases; and surely then he could make no less a purchase for us than so *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*; infinitely indeed beyond all our deservings, yet but commensurate with the merits and satisfaction of him that was both God and man.

We are safe then; the righteousness of God himself is engaged for our security: for it is that very crown of righteousness that God, the righteous Judge, shall give as due in justice and righteousness, by virtue of that covenant made with man: the ransom being paid, and value received, in the merits and blood of his only begotten Son. Our faith hath the same foundation with our Apostle St. Paul's; if we can but come off as well to the last, our triumph will be as glorious, *2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

Nothing can animate courage more than love, and nothing can better ensure the love of Christ to us; we may then be fully persuaded with the same Apostle, *Rom. viii. 38, 39. That neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, nor any other evil or enemy, or*
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pretended friend, implied under these various appellations, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord : who hath prepared for all those that love him, such glorious things, such immense blessedness, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Which God of his infinite mercy, in his own due time bestow upon us, for the sake and through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons, and one God, be ascribed all honour, might, majesty, and adoration, now and forever more. Amen.



SERMON XXI.

Preached on St. Philip and St. James's Day.

The righteous Man's Reward.

PSALM lvi. II.

*So that a man shall say, Verily there is
a reward for the righteous: verily he
is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

THE royal Prophet is often upon this deep and fundamental point of natural religion, *viz.* of solving and vindicating the providence of God; according to an old enquiry even amongst the *Heathens*, *Cur bonis male, cur malis bene?*

He himself was sometimes unsettled and wavering, and wanted establishment; but oftener troubled with the impertinent objections of others, as *Doeg the Edomite*, or that *Fool* that said in his heart *there is no God*, and all those, whosoever they were, that say in their hearts, but have not the courage to speak it out, nor one
good

good argument to maintain it, We shall never be moved! we shall never be in adversity! yet after all suggestions both from himself and others, with closer reasoning and observation, by looking about him both at home and abroad, he became well versed in the matter, and could draw up the conclusion, almost demonstrably: *so that a man shall say*, any man of common sense and reason, without prejudice, that standeth by and observeth, shall pronounce; *Verily there is a reward for the righteous.* Thus *Psal.* lxxiii. 3. we find him upon this strain: *The prosperity of the wicked, and the hard measures upon the righteous*; upon which he owns, his feet were almost gone, *his steps had well nigh slipt*; but he soon recovered himself, and by looking nearer into the secret, discovered the purpose of heaven. *verse 17. I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end*, that is, of the wicked: his method was, to consult with his religion, and take counsel *in the house of God*: to take into consideration the glorious promises and threatned judgments of another world, as well as of this, and to cast eternity into the balance against all that can be enjoyed or suffered in this present, and momentary estate; and then the divine dispensations would all come right; and the felicities of the wicked would be no man's envy. So then, as to present prosperity or adversity, putting both ends together, as we use to say, the unrighteous will be no great gainers by the one, nor the righteous such losers by the other: for look

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to the end, and you will find all fall even at last: for so he bids us, *to mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together, the end of the wicked shall be cut off,* Psalm xxxvii. 37, 38.

And all this hath been made so visible and exemplary as to this life, or so conclusive as to the next, that surely no rational considering man can withhold his assent from the truth of these *two propositions*, so express and emphatical in the Text, upon which I am to discourse,

I. *The First, That verily there is a reward for the righteous.* And

II. *The Second* may be referred to the wicked, (in whose case this is a soft and tender way of judging, and pronouncing a harsh sentence, as we commonly use it, when we see any course of impiety carried on) *Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth;* and surely then such enormous wickedness cannot long escape the divine vengeance.

Both assertions of the power and justice of God upon the earth are made against those, who (if they believe any such Being at all) do shut him up into heaven, his place and confinement of rest and residence, fix his happiness in sloth and disregard, and so wholly set him aside in the government of the world:

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one of the oldest heresies in *Pagan* Theology, and most destructive to the fundamentals of all religion. For if God hath no regard to the actions of men, men will soon live without any to him: the wicked will carry it with a high hand, and vouch nature and reason for their liberties and impieties: and the righteous too will be cast down, must throw up their principles of morality and religion, and serve God for nought, according to the complaint of our royal Prophet, on this occasion, *Psalms xl. 3.* *If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*

I. *First* then, It will be a great vindication, both of the goodness and justice of God's providence in the government of the world, if we can make good, that, first or last, righteous men are not without their reward: *Verily there is a reward for the righteous.* Now as to the matter of a reward, it is not worth our dispute, whether it be *ex congruo* or *condigno*, from any intrinsic value or worthiness in the nature of the act, as makes the reward in justice to be due; or *virtute bene placiti*, by virtue of the free and undeserved favour of God who hath promised; the first be far from us to presume upon, for in all relations towards God we are *unprofitable servants*, even the most perfect and upright who do their best. All the creatures of God answer the ends of their being, man is the great sole delinquent in the whole creation. But throwing aside all pretence to merit, it is

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sufficient that God hath promised, and by experience and observation it hath ever been made good, that he *will reward* our endeavours and sincerity, as tho' they were truly meritorious. Upon a covenant made with the *Jews*, all manner of temporal blessings were ensured upon their obedience: and it is manifested through their whole story, that the vicissitudes of blessings and judgments, did in a constant and regular course, follow upon their obedience and rebellions.

Nor are these temporal blessings taken off or suspended under the Gospel; but still insured by promise to all those that *seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof*: and godliness is entitled to the promises of this life, as well as that which is to come. Christianity is no such abject religion as to enstate us, whilst we are seriously professing of it, in poverty and distress: but there are a great many comfortable things of this world will arise from the practice of it. And as to the immense crown of glory in the kingdom of heaven, we must set it at an infinite distance from any right or claim on our side; and yet we may call it *a reward*, without falling upon the absurd *Romish* doctrine of *merit*; for under that name and notion it passes in Holy Scripture. It is that *crown of righteousness, which God, the righteous Judge, shall give at that day*: that is, in righteousness and justice bestow upon us, as due by virtue of covenant and promise, tho' infinitely transcending our deservings.

Thus

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Thus the title and claim to a *Reward* is clear as to both worlds, tho' the whole disposal and free donation is of the Lord; but we need no firmer a settlement than his promises, which will be plentifully supplied out of his unwearied and inexhaustible goodness, and from that infinite fund of merits assigned to us by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, in whose name, and for whose sake, *we may boldly come to the throne of grace, and obtain all manner of blessings*, that we in faith and sincerity pray for, with allowance to the wisdom of God to judge and determine the use and expedience of them. Now, because these fall not in so visible and sensible a train, as to temporal blessings, the conveyance is often questioned. But God's dealings, as in *severities* so in *mercies*, are not as man's: *he sees not as man sees, nor judges as man judges*: and be sure then exercises not his divine attributes, according to the measures of mens passions in love and mercy, in anger and hatred. Here his blessings are not heaped upon us always according to our wishes, or even our hearty prayers; nor yet in an hasty manner upon the back of every good action, in such a miraculous and extraordinary way, that every one shall stand amazed at the prodigious affluence upon righteous men. But his wisdom must so far interpose in the acts of his goodness, and measure out the dispensations of it, as is suitable to the temper, and fitted to the discretion and management of the receiver, and also to the times and other cir-

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cumstances present and to come. Considerations are to be made in respect to those that are to enjoy, and those that are to stand by and behold; for the encouragement of virtue, when it is immediately rewarded, and for the incitement to patience (the noblest of virtues) when the reward is suspended or delayed: this allowance must be given to the wisdom of God, and it is well known we cannot judge for ourselves. As for instance,

I. We are to consider, that over-pouring of blessings may cause some tempers, that are regular in a moderate estate, to launch out into pride, forgetfulness, and other exorbitances; and to let fall that righteousness, and other virtues, which they before practised. *Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me,* was Agur's sensible prayer, *Prov. xxx. 8, 9.* suspecting himself, that either Extreme might be likely to ensnare him, and indeed they are both very dangerous. Poverty and hard circumstances oftentimes beget in men a profligate conscience, by which they shall in time drop their honesty, think themselves necessitated to injury, forget by degrees, or break over, the laws and boundaries of right and wrong, shift and falsify in their words and promises: and so make cunning and knavery, or downright thievery, their trade and subsistence. *Agur* it seems feared as much, *Lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain:* that is, fall to perjury, violations of oaths and engagements, the usual practices that insolvent
and

and indigent wretches are too often subject unto.

The other extreme of wealth, he suspected as much, as liable to as great hazards, and temptations: *Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?* forgetfulness and ingratitude, pride and haughtiness, being very common effects of great riches, by which men are apt to think themselves, by a certain right and merit, exalted above the rest of the world, and so forget and disregard the great Author and Donor of those blessings; and lord it over their brethren: *Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seat?* says St. James, ii. 6.

Altho' these are not the inseparable and never-failing consequences of these two extremes; yet we cannot but admire and adore the divine goodness, that hath placed, at any time, the best and most righteous of men in a middle estate, intermixt with some suitable and seasonable difficulties, and hardships, by which they are guarded from these eminent dangers, and thereby their eternal welfare and interest is secured. The forementioned Apostle (i. 9, 10.) seems to allude to this middle and safe station, *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low.* It is exaltation to the former to be raised, and an happy degradation to the latter to be levelled, and so both to meet in this moderate, and less hazardous estate and condition. But,

2. How can we possibly fix any charge upon the goodness and justice of God, if good men are sometimes severely handled, when we consider
that

that by the *righteous* we are not to mean men of absolute perfection, but men of some infirmities, nay sometimes of many great failures and lapses? When we look near, and come to be close and intimate with some, in the main very good men, we often find these out ourselves; but God must make greater and more certain discoveries: for these they must be minded, and taken under correction: and God for these offences must so far withhold his hand, as to withdraw or intermit his blessings, or rather give them the more suitable blessing of a chastisement. For that reason *David* so often applauds, as a sovereign method (even for a king) the seasonable intermission of glory and prosperity, and the lucky intervention of some proper punishment and adversity: *It is well for me that I was afflicted, else I had gone astray.* One lapse uncorrected will bring on another, and from thence in time may ensue an inveterate habit of sinning, which may soon become past all correction. So we must not say, a man is too severely dealt withal, because of some evils which he suffers, that are hurtful to his health, his fortunes, or any of the circumstances of this present life, which are indeed evils, physically so speaking (as the schools distinguish) but yet not morally, but of the greatest necessity and advantage to the spiritual health and well-being of the soul, and the nobler end of a future and everlasting life. Besides, punishment is the necessary effect of sin, the result of God's vindictive justice: where this hath been pardoned, or
remitted,

remitted, the other hath been strictly and indispensably required; of which I shall have occasion hereafter to give both instances and reasons. It is a distinguishing blessedness, when the righteous receive their portion of afflictions in this life; tho' their *cup* be never so *full* and *bitter*: but an after reckoning, a punishment in reserve to the judgment of the great day, it is *that* that is the dismal stroke of divine vengeance, but shall never rest upon the lot of the righteous. Again,

3. We may be out in pronouncing upon the proceedings of Divine providence upon a quite different consideration. The person upon whom this severity falls, and for which we take upon us to censure the goodness and justice of God, may all this while be no righteous man at all. There may be a latent hypocrisy under all his seeming shew of piety; and for that the divine vengeance may fetch him up, and deal with him not as he shews, but as he really is. Wickedness indeed is usually notorious and open: *the works of the flesh*, saith the Apostle, *are manifest*; and he that doth them proves himself a wicked person in matter of fact. But as to piety and true virtue, the case is different, the chief seat of which is the heart, and who can see and search there, but God alone who rewards and punishes?

So that outward acts alone do not denominate a righteous man, because piety may be pretended and counterfeited; and religion made

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a cloak, easy to throw over us, and as easy to throw off, upon many occasions, and upon as many vile uses; and then it becomes the highest impiety and irreligion. But besides the hypocrisy, some concealed villany, some enormous wickedness may be secretly kept up in practice by this fair pretender to virtue and holiness, and then the judgments from heaven are but his due measure; he is really a wicked man, and shall have his portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. How often have we seen a sly pretender to gravity and sobriety, to more than ordinary zeal and strictness in religion, come forth with some scandalous and flaming crime, which he hath long indulged and smothered up, and is but just broke out? God's judgments have overtaken him in the discovery. He is no exception against the providence of God in this position that we are to maintain, that *verily there is a reward for the righteous.*

We must be at a great loss for the discovery of righteous men in our age, the pretences run so high, and so poorly and basely are they answered in true, genuine, and substantial piety and virtue: how many zealous and furious defenders have we of the true religion against the false, that have themselves none at all? How many patrons have we seen or heard of, at the head of some very pious parties, that are themselves monsters of impiety, notorious *Atheists* in principle and practice, and when time serves, and company suits, open avouchers of both? Yet notwithstanding are they almost
fainted

fainted by those that are under their protection, and thought to have some latent grace and goodness, some hopeful seeds of election in them; so apt are men to think a good, that is, *their own* cause will sanctify both persons and actions. But to cast them all together: How much doth the *pharisaical* temper prevail? whilst little *reformations* are carrying on, *the weightier matters* of both morality and true religion, *judgment, mercy, and faith*, which comprehend the whole law of righteousness, both towards God, and towards man, are notoriously omitted and disregarded. Can there be greater violations of this law, than injurious and unrighteous dealings, either in publick or private stations? than causeless divisions, and separations, as to the church of God? than an uncharitable and malicious humour and practice, carried on without regret or reflection, through the general conversation of some men? and yet they are still upon the cry of *reformation*, and against the sins of the age; and indeed therein justly enough, if they would look home too, make search and enquiry there, and an exemplary amendment. But now when inferiour vices and delinquencies are started at, and under a severer censure with us, than those that are of the highest rank and greatest malignity; when we over-look the most substantial virtues and duties, that are of the very essence of morality and true religion, and are so blind as not to discover the grossest and habitual wickedness that is destructive and contradictory to both:
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How is it possible that we should be able to judge of the regular proceedings of Divine providence in rewarding the righteous, 'till we have rightly distinguished them from unrighteous and sinful men? when in our judging of these matters we are so subject to the *pharisaical* distemper of *straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel*: enough to choke the reason and understanding of the most sagacious enquirers. But again,

4. We must consider too, that righteous men, (when we have found out those that are most truly such) by continual success and prosperity, without any rubs or intermissions by the way, may be apt to forget themselves, and run up into a great mistake in judging of these matters; and call that the natural and due effects of their industry and wisdom, which is the blessing of the Lord. This was the charge more than once given by *Moses* to the *Israelites*, that they should not ungratefully ascribe to themselves what was the immediate goodness of God, and say in their hearts — *My power, and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth. But that they should remember the Lord their God, who giveth power to get wealth: if you do thus forget him, I testify against you this day, that ye shall surely perish,* Deut. viii. 17, 18, 19. Such ingratitude it seems was adjudged no less than a capital crime, and no less than death was its due punishment. So that this then is also one wise end of Divine providence, in the more sparing dispensations of blessings,

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or proper intermission or suspension of them, to righteous men, lest they should call them their own, which are to be looked upon as talents of trust, to be improved in the service, and according to the designment of their Lord. And is not a check and punishment very seasonable, as well as just, upon that man, who indeed hath thrived and prospered in the world for a great while, through the blessing of God, because he was just and righteous in his dealings and behaviour, but begins to forget the great Donor, that hath blessed him, to ascribe all to himself, and to manage his affairs and dispose of his plenty, quite different from the trust that was reposed in him? The best men in their morals, may not always be the wisest in their intellectuals: and therefore not only safe and secure must they be, but more completely blessed and happy, whilst they are under both the admonishing inspection and discipline of the divine wisdom, justice, and goodness.

5. Another consideration of great moment ought to be had in this matter, which will alter the case much, in judging of the nature of this reward assured to the righteous: and that is, that fulness of measure, even in the good things of this life, may be a desirable reward to our appetites; yet not the true measure that God judges a better sufficiency for us: and if the stander-by thinks it but scanty to the righteous man, he judges amiss, unless he is sure that there is discontent and repining that attends it. *Godliness with contentment is great*

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great gain: if providence gives that in fulness, tho' with a more sparing hand in common temporal blessings, he hath certainly then filled the most capacious desires: What if he be denied the little boons and gratifications of this life? to be contented without them, is the much higher blessing and truer enjoyment. *No good thing will God withhold* from him that leads a godly life. It is no matter what great and glorious things, what plenty or prosperity he keeps from him; he is as good as his word, and no way wanting in his promised rewards to the righteous, so long as *no good thing is withholden* from him. Greater and more glorious things may be said of *contentment*, as it stands alone in any state or condition whatsoever, than of the highest grandeur or largest possessions: but it is enough that every body, by experience, hath sometimes found, or by his hearty wishes and desires may easily guess, that it is the truest and most valuable felicity which is attainable in this life: and then we have fully gained our point in this only and single solution, of the equity and regularity of divine providence: *Verily there is a reward for the righteous.* For *righteousness*, that is to say, virtue and piety, are the sole fundamental qualifications for a solid and rational satisfaction of mind, and contentment of life: the righteous cannot fail of it, for says Solomon, *A good man is satisfied from himself*, Prov. xiv. 14. There are many other reasonable accounts to be given of the hardships that the righteous do oftentimes meet with in the world,

world, both to reconcile them to the goodness and justice of God, and the good of the righteous themselves: as that they tend to the honour of God in the government and order of the world; to the vindication of his dominion, that he suffers no sin to go unpunished, and especially in his Saints, his favourites and nearest relatives; like a kind and tender father to his children, will bring them under correction for every offence: that he will make them give (as in all reason due) the best testimony of their loyalty and integrity; that they might not fix their hopes and happiness in this life, and confine their reward to it, but rest and settle their minds upon future promises: that they might have opportunities and occasions of exercising their patience, and passive obedience, and all other excellent virtues, as you have heard already from our Apostle (*James i. 2, 3, 4. 12. v. 11.*) out of the *Epistle for this Day*. *My brethren, count it all joy, when you fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing:* there is a deficiency in a Christian state, if we are not sometimes put upon a tryal: so, *verse 12. of the same chapter,* we are farther encouraged: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.* So the same Apostle tells us again: *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and seen the end of the*

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Lord: we had never heard of his patience, had he not been renowned for afflictions: and the end of the Lord is most honourable; a design and purpose of trying him, and all great Saints for their higher advance and promotion. In him *mark the perfect and upright man, &c.* So was his character, and so his end, (*Job i. 1.*) *perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil.* And, *so (xlii. 12.) the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.*

I say, notwithstanding I might enlarge farther upon the reasonableness and necessity of afflictions; yet let this suffice for the vindication of God's providence in respect to the righteous, that *verily there is a reward for them.* But let us make the greatest concessions to those that will not observe the distinguishing of Divine providence; and cast in all the disadvantages of the world, as the hard lot and portion of the righteous: tho' we assign them to racks and inquisitions, and all vexations and tortures that the malice of devils can devise, and without any respite; yet after all,

6. Lastly, In considering, let us look to the end, according to our rule first lay'd down. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace. Ultima semper expectanda dies, &c.* Let us have patience till the man comes to die: let us not pass sentence upon providence before its care is at an end; it may bring him off well at last. What! tho' he meets with storms and tempests, makes a long and very dangerous voyage, if he arrives

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at last safe in his *port* with all his rich *cargo*; if he hath but secured a fund and *treasure in heaven*, he is happy beyond all the men of honour, and riches, and pleasure; nay, and tho' we suppose that they have never been interrupted in their enjoyments by any disturbances of the world. Therefore, if we deal fairly with providence, we ought to follow the righteous man with our eye, to the last period of his life. Doth he make a comfortable exit, doth he go off the stage of the world greatly, and gracefully, and gloriously, with a pious sense of the infirmities and miscarriages he hath been subject to, and a sound repentance for them, and a well grounded assurance in his God and Saviour; and in a word, with a most peaceable and composed mind and conscience? Here is all victory and triumph, the most proper effect and happy conclusion of wars and difficult encounters! what follows is full possession, a reward beyond all objection, *an exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. Take the assurance of our Lord that hath purchased it, Matt. xiii. 43. *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father*. If this be made good, providence, however seemingly irregular here below, hath made sufficient amends: *Fear not, little flock*, says our Saviour, (Luke xii. 32.) *for it is your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom*: and we are assured by St. Paul, (Rom. viii. 17, 18.) that *if so be we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together*: and that *the sufferings of this present time are*

not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

The prospect of all which, must give wonderful complacence and ease to the righteous man under all his troubles, which the wicked rarely attain unto, and never hold long, under their highest pleasures and enjoyments. For of this he hath so good assurance before-hand, by a powerful convincing faith, by the comforts of a well grounded hope, that he bears up with a delight, beyond all the attainments of the unrighteous, under all the difficulties of the world. If the Scriptures be true, (of which he hath the highest evidence) if God hath made any revelation of his will, ever since the beginning of the world; these glorious promises are always annexed to his commands, the *portion and inheritance of the righteous*, the *sure mercies of David*, that can never be taken from them.

Nay, if there be a God, he is safe and secure enough; for *He loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity*; that is his inseparable property, and we cannot divide it from him: and therefore the righteous who fare no better in this world, must necessarily be received into the highest favour and blessedness in the next, when the wicked shall be *turned into bell, and all the people that forget God*. For, as the Being of a God, and the exercise of his providence, are discovered by that encouragement and preference that is given to the righteous; so, as our royal Prophet tells us, *Psalms ix. 16. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth, and the*

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the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Which should bring me to the other part of the Text; Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth: upon which words I purposed also to discourse, as seeming to bear a relation to the portion and due reward of unrighteous and sinful men : but that I find will prove a subject as large as this before us, and will require much more time, than now remains; and therefore must defer it to another opportunity.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three Persons, and one God, be ascribed (as is most due) all honour, might, majesty, and dominion, this time forth and for evermore. Amen.



SERMON XXII.

Preached on St. *Philip* and St. *James's* Day.

The wicked Man's Lot.

PSALM lviii. II.

*So that a man shall say, Verily there is
a reward for the righteous: verily he
is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

UPON the first part of these words, I have already discoursed from this place: and have endeavoured, in various instances, to give such resolutions of the proceedings of Divine providence in relation to the righteous, that we may conclude they have a visible preference in the Divine favour; that *verily there is a reward for them*, either made good in the truest and most substantial blessings of this life, such as are most proper for the wisdom and goodness of God to bestow, and such

such as are the most valuable to the wisest and most virtuous men, and are sufficient for contentment, the truest end of all temporal blessings: or if these fail at any time, or are intermitted by some seasonable punishments and afflictions, yet their virtues thereby are put on tryal and made the more illustrious, their great end of salvation pursued and advanced; and if their righteousness hold it, in an infinite recompence for all their hardships and sufferings, they shall be secured of the possession of everlasting bliss and glory. And these are the *sure mercies of David*.

I will trouble you with no farther repetition upon what hath been already said upon this subject, but shall pass over to the other Lot of wicked and unrighteous men, to which the part of the Text may seem to bear a more direct reference.

II. *Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth:* an expression we commonly use, when we see very unrighteous dealings put in practice, any course of impiety carried on. *Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth;* and surely then such and such enormous wickedness cannot escape the Divine vengeance.

Here we are also to vindicate the providence of God: how comes it to fare so well with unrighteous men? that they seem more than competitors for the good things of this life, challenge the better share, and think to carry the world before them. But as their title is very

bad, so their possession shall afford them little of true, or very short enjoyment; and an after-reckoning will fully decide the point.

As the mistakes in respect to the righteous (as to their reward in this life) are grounded upon false notions and apprehensions of God's goodness and wisdom, and also our misunderstanding the true substantial good of the righteous themselves: so likewise mistakes concerning the punishments of the wicked, arise from false conceptions of the vindictive power of God, and the exercise thereof. For he tempers the affluence of his goodness by his wisdom, lest it should prove hurtful to the receiver; his displeasure and wrath break forth in slow degrees, with many delays and reserves; and this final destruction of the wicked themselves, at such a time, when necessity calls for a vindication of his honour in shewing his just enmity to sin: and when the example of his vengeance may be a signal warning to all the standers-by, that they may behold and observe, what must be the lot and portion of all wicked and ungodly men. So that goodness is the ultimate design, even of all the severest dispensations of God's providence: it is that which he delights to dispense out in the most grateful benefits and mercies; yet having to deal with men that so often abuse his goodness, and are so apt to turn his grace and favour *into wantonness*, there is a necessity he should change his methods, and without laying aside his goodness he shall discharge his justice in a seasonable and beneficial

cial severity. For punishment, according to its true and natural design and tendency, is rather an act of mercy, than revenge: and ought to be so intended in all secular societies, the chief end of it being to do good, and not to retaliate evil. Therefore, before we pronounce against the course of God's providence in this matter, we must learn to judge and distinguish right,

1. What is his way. and rule of punishing wicked men.

2. What is his end and purpose. And,

3. In relation to the wicked, whether they are punished, yea or nay.

To discover which designs and purposes, let us make these following observations, according to the method I followed in my former discourse. As,

1. We may observe that God doth not punish with that fury, our passions would fly out with on the like case and occasion: not with the haste of *Diagoras Melius*, the Philosopher, who, because immediate execution was not done by immediate vengeance from heaven, upon the person that had defrauded him in the *depositum*, or trust put into his hands, threw up all his principles and notions of a God, and his providence, and turns a professed *Atheist*. He would believe no such things as gods, at least not worship such imaginary beings, that would take so little notice of his homage as not to do him justice. And so we find some of *Job's* friends, or rather formal visitants, arguing to the same purpose, and drawing the same inferences.

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If we attribute passions to God (as we must do to speak after the manner of men, and to mens capacities) they must not be like those of men, subject to the like excursions, to intemperance, and inconsideration in their exercise; but they are (even his anger itself) as we may say, sedate and calm, the regular emanations of justice, goodness, and wisdom. For tho' we call the execution of them by the names of *indignation, vengeance, vials of wrath, and a consuming fire*, as indeed they come home at last with full measure and sore amazement: yet how long and tedious are they in coming? as tho' (contrary to the complaint of holy David) God had *forgotten to be angry*, and had *shut* his displeasure in his *tender mercies*. It is said that a *thousand years in his sight are but as one day*, in nothing surely so signally as in his gracious forbearance: we can scarce give a day, an hour, a minute's respite to our vengeance, but immediately on upon our enemy, with fury and violence: but he can delay, when it is in the uneasy case of punishment, can protract and lengthen out the time, if it were for a *thousand years*, and it is not tedious to him, it seemeth but as *one day*: and yet are his judgments sure and severe, and will one day overtake the *wicked doer*.

But it is a very hard case, to deny the Being of a gracious God, or explode his providence, because he is not quick enough in his vengeance, because he is *slow to anger, and of great mercy*,
and

and *so often repenteth of the evil* : we may call them passions, but they produce the more happy effects for us, than the highest perfections, and indeed they are worthy of, and becoming the sublimest majesty, to repent of a designed evil or judgment, and to call back a *destroying angel*. *Plutarch*, an *Heathen* Moralist, gives us a very Christian reason why God, under the highest provocations, forbears to punish and suspends the execution of his righteous judgments, *i.e. to teach us patience and forbearance*, a virtue so glorious and of such absolute necessity to make a good man, that he sets forth himself as a daily example to us at the suspense of his own justice.

2. In a particular instance to some unrighteous men, we may observe, that he is so good and gracious a God, that because there may be some sort of good dispositions and qualities in them, some refuse good actions done by them, through the whole course of their impieties, he would not be indebted to them, but he will reward them even for those chance good things, and *verily they have their reward*, as saith our Saviour of the *Pharisees*; their charity and almsgiving, being beneficial to the poor, their sitting in *Moses's* seat, and preaching some sound edifying doctrine to the benefit of the people, for the encouragement and improvement to some religious duties; their examples of mortification in some instances at least, all abstracted and separated from their hypocrisy, and greater vileness, were in themselves praiseworthy,

worthy ; and let them carry the vogue of the people and have the best share in the prosperity of the world, and that is all they are like to have, *Verily they have their reward.* So *Abraham* says to the *rich man* in hell *lifting up his eyes being in torment: Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things:* altho' he failed in his charity to *Lazarus*, was sordid to others, and luxurious upon himself, yet it is a venture but he stumbled upon some good actions some time of his life ; for those he was amply rewarded in the world before ; he could expect no more, he had had his full measure already, not so much as a *drop of cold water* left in arrears. No one that could have *Abraham's* view of this great man in torments, would envy or desire his former possessions and enjoyments ; they were indeed less than one drop of water in comparison to the ocean of his endless miseries.

3. We must acknowledge and conclude, that God best knows the times and seasons, when the example (which is the greatest end of temporal punishment upon wicked men) will be most signal and remarkable, and then punishes at the death of the offender, or perhaps time enough in his posterity, after he himself hath had his full glut of plenty and enjoyment. Which posterity are not so punished in the right of their forefathers, tho' on them lay their guilt and sin : that be far from the justice of God : he hath made an oath, and often repeated it against such proceedings, *Ezek. xviii. and xxxiii. The son shall*

*shall not bear the iniquity of the father; the soul that sins shall die: but they have sins of their own (without those by inheritance) to merit such a punishment, and so it is no hard or unrighteous measure. Thus God, who doth not delight to be frequent in his severities, unites the whole force of his just vengeance, in one stroke, at a time, that the world may take notice, what are the dismal effects of provoking his anger: that sin will damn the offenders, if they die in impenitence, and that is enough for them; and will entail a curse upon posterity for example sake, and that the name of God be not blasphemed. These judgments a holy Prelate * of our Church, hath called *the divine accents*; such signal periods and emphatical notifications of God's enmity and displeasure at sin, that the world may know and see, that verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

This is the decision of the case that *Job* makes to his atheistical friends, *ch. xxvii. 11, &c.* *I will teach you by the hand of God, that which is with the Almighty, I will not conceal. Behold all ye yourselves have seen it, why then are we thus altogether vain? This is the portion of a wicked man with God; and the heritage of the oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty. If his children be multiplied it is for the sword: And his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.*

* *Dr. Taylor's Life of Christ.*

Simeon and *Levi's* cruelty upon the *Sichemites* was so heinous a transgression in the sight of God that it must be punished in a continued train of curses upon their posterity. The *Amalekites* were punished for a sin 400 years after the commission: the *Jews*, and the rest of the nations about, were at that time most at leisure, as it were, to remark and take notice of the judgment, and therein the vindication of God's honour and justice. For *Saul's* breaking covenant with the *Gibeonites*, seven of his sons are executed; hanged up to the Lord in *Gibeah* of *Saul*, that the crime and punishment might be made signal. For the sins of *Solomon*, the kingdom is divided in his posterity, and the greatest portion carried away from his family, by *Jeroboam* a servant of it. *Abah's* children never prospered after their father's impieties; after his own punishments had been respited from time to time, and he had too long enjoyed the high pleasures of tyranny and oppression: with innumerable instances more, of judgments in reversion for example sake laid upon posterity for the sins of their forefathers, but in equity too, not too severe for their own delinquencies. We look with disadvantage upon present affairs; and one age at present view may amaze us to see so many wicked men and designs prosperous; but they that shall live to see or read the state and history of the next, may be convinced that all those unrighteous practices have met with adequate punishment.

4. We must consider again, that God hath

a peculiar use and occasion for wicked men: *The Lord hath made all things for himself, saith the wise man, Prov. xvi. 4. yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.* He doth not make them wicked for such purpose, but they are already made so to his hands, by their own corrupt wills and dispositions, and by their vicious practices: and then they are fit instruments and executioners of his displeasure and wrath, even upon a just and seasonable occasion against his own people.

The *Philistines* must be prosperous sometimes and successful, and by the aiding and assisting favour of God, that they may gaul and vex the *Israelites*, and be as useful and very salutary thorns in their sides, who would otherwise be too much pampered with their own fatness and prosperity. And the *Affyrians* by the same hand must be so victorious, as to carry them into captivity, into a strange land, that they may be made sensible both of the sin and punishment of worshipping strange gods.

Christianity itself, for ought we know, might be lost, at least much remit and languish in the obligations both of sound faith and conformable practice, were it not bounded by enemies; and to scourge us too for as great sins and impieties as those enemies themselves can be guilty of. God must keep up an army of such, (the more wicked and cruel perhaps the more useful upon some occasions) as guards against the rebellion of his own people.

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The enemies * we now fear, are no doubt the enemies of God too, and his most holy religion; and yet our sins may make them successful: it is our repentance and reformation, that must mortify and humble them, and bring us victory and peace.

We are apt to complain, and think hard of Providence, that *Infidels* and *Papists* have now, and have had so long, such large territories and flourishing kingdoms and dominions; but certainly as injuriously (if not as blasphemously) as that arrogant prince found fault with God's architecture in making the world, and thought if he had stood by, he could have given him better direction.

St. Paul (1 Cor. xi. 19.) says of *Heresies* or sects (as in the margin, which are more vexatious to us at home) that *they must be; that they which are approved may be made manifest amongst us.* For the same reason in its full scope and sense, and for many others, that we may well own ourselves ignorant of, these enemies must surround us, they must be: God will have it so, to keep up that balance in the government of the world, that he judges most for his honour and glory, and for the truest interest and benefit of his church and holy religion, against which (as he hath given us security) *the gates of hell shall never prevail.*

* Preached in the Time of the War with France.

Thus it hath been the rule and order of the divine providence, ever since the beginning of the world, to give forth the common blessings of temporary prosperity and success among wicked men and nations, and not settle them wholly (as their sole inheritance and propriety) upon the righteous. The dispensation and management is certainly for God's own honour, and for the good of his people whom he loveth; for his wisdom and goodness and justice are engaged in it. But,

5. To take every wicked man singly, and to examine him apart, we cannot conclude it well with him upon every glaring show of prosperity: For as *wicked*, so certainly *no peace* belongs to him: *No peace to the wicked, saith our God*; and where the Prophet says this from the Lord, *Is. lvii. 21.* in the verse before he gives us a comparison, that will fully answer all the turbulencies that can be describ'd or imagin'd; *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* It is then no more well with him, than with a distempered stomach, invited every day to the delicacy and variety of luxurious eating: For no man can be truly happy in the bare possession of temporal blessings, unless capable of the right enjoyment: As no stomach can have a true delight and gust in its diet, unless it can taste, digest, and do its natural offices. Besides, the mind must act the chiefest part in all the variety of pleasures: whilst that is possess'd with troublesome and disturbing thoughts and de-

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fires, quarrelling and contending one with another, embroiled with turbulent passions, that keep up a constant faction and sedition within, it is impossible it should ever join in the mirth and enjoyment. *Nubula mens est, hæc ubi regnant.* "The mind is clouded, where these bear sway," and utterly discomposed for any manner of delight or satisfaction. No man can call a rich or a proud man happy, who hath the gnawing disease of avarice, or is under the continual perplexities, with frequent vexatious disappointments of ambition; no more than we can pronounce a man *sound and well*, and that *he lives at his ease*, whilst he rolles upon a bed of *down*, under the tortures of the *stone and gout*.

Wicked men have not such enjoyments as we are apt to imagine, and they would make us believe: There is a forced joy and a feigned pleasure: They are sometimes errant hypocrites in their lusts, as some are in their shows of piety and virtue; and pretend a gust and fine relish, when they have no such matter: when their delicious doses are offensive to their own appetites. What a poor and insipid cheat is a specious enjoyment without, whilst all is dark and tragical within? *Their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing them:* And if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.

— *Prima est hæc ultio, quod se
Judice nemo nocens absolvitur.*

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It is the height of punishment, that a wicked man cannot acquit himself; his conscience gives him many a *secret* lash, *sordo verberare cedit*, which we hear nothing of. Let us not then envy the strain'd jollities of such men, no more than the revellings of malefactors and desperadoes. But should they stifle or sear their consciences, or lay them quiet by atheism and infidelity; yet mark the end, according to our Psalmist's observation; as *that of the perfect and upright shall be peace, so the transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off*. When they shall say *peace and safety*, then *sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape, whose judgment now lingreth not, and their damnation slumbereth not*. (1 Thes. v. 3.)

But if they go down to the grave in peace, who can secure them in the next world? If they die in impenitence, and their sins lodge them in the mansions of hell, what a poor portion have they had in all the possessions and enjoyments of this mortal life?

6. Lastly, after all, as we observed on the other part of the *Text*, in relation to the righteous, that we may be out in pronouncing upon divine providence: The person that we fix upon, as an instance of receiving hard measure from the hand of God, may be no righteous man at all; there may be a latent hypocrisy under all his pretended piety, some vile enormity secretly carried on, for which the judgments

ments of God are his due measure: So here we may be as much mistaken in our rash censures of men, upon bare suspicion, upon prejudice or common vogue. We quarrel at providence, that they are not punished according to our sentence, when all this while, they may be, for ought I know, in the main very good men, just and right in all their actings and dealings; good patriots, pursuing one honest end and interest, the good of their country in its wealth and peace, and the promotion of true religion; but perhaps they are not of the right stamp and party, they cannot please the multitude, or what we vulgarly call the mob; and so it is wonder'd that the voice of God doth not go with that of the people, denounce immediate judgment upon them, and make them examples of wrath and vengeance. But is not this very hard measure upon the providence of God, as well as upon them, that whom we envy, he must hate; and then complain, and call his government into question, because he will not be the executioner of his own but our vengeance? Thus I have endeavoured, as fairly as I am able, to *cast the lot* betwixt the righteous and the wicked, as to the rewards and punishments of this life; and judge you, into whose lap the the best inheritance is fallen. Let us conclude all with some necessary remarks upon the whole.

(1.) We must lay it down for an undoubted truth, That all punishment from God is for sin. He would have no occasion for it, and

he has no delight in it, to afflict and grieve the children of men. And here the righteous and the wicked fall under the same condemnation, and the punishment is intended for the good of both; only at last with this difference, that it proves final to the wicked, even to their utter destruction, if they have not answered the end of punishment, but persevered in their provocations: And then God is not the author, but they themselves of their own ruin. St. Paul (2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, where he sets forth the Christian sufferings) distinguishes these kinder punishments, from those in greater extremity which fall upon the wicked: *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed.*

And now hence we are to learn, what we are to do, when we are under any calamity: We must search after the sin that was the occasion, for we are not punished for nothing; and commonly in the nature of the punishment, we may find out such resemblances, as we may easily trace the way back to the original cause; and what have we then to do? but to call ourselves to an account; to take that lust and sin to task, to repent of it, and reform our lives, unless we defy misery. For there is a gradation in punishment; if we are punished once, to amend us, let us fear and tremble; if we fall again, we cannot but think, if God's hand was in the first punishment, the next, or be sure a third, may prove final destruction. Let us ever, in this case,

remember our Lord's admonition, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.*

(2.) In judging of the regularity of divine providence in respect to rewards and punishments, we must take the world to come as well as this into consideration. What if God heaps a few temporal blessings upon wicked men in this life, but afterward sends them into their deserved place, *go ye cursed*; Is he not sufficiently just? What if he doth not throw his thunder-bolts upon all crying provocations and enormities, cannot he reach the sinners in another world? Can any complain that the wicked shall have too much favour, whilst their souls are immortal? It is mere ill-nature, and when their own sins lye another way, that makes some men require such rigid demonstrations of divine justice.

Again; On the other hand, is he not a merciful God, exceeding gracious, if the righteous walk through *a vale of misery*, through all manner of difficulties and hardships, and at last arrive, after a short life, at a land of everlasting rest and happiness? We must not arraign God's providence over the world, because *pyrates* and *murderers*, and *church* and *state robbers*, and other miscreants, grow rich and great; because *traitors* and *conspirators* against their king and country, have sometimes the lucky turn of being renowned for being the best patriots and defenders of them; there is no great mystery in all this, so long as there is a hell behind, where satisfaction for all such injuries, villainies and cruelties

elties, will be making to all eternity, but never paid off. Much less have men of worth and virtue reason to repine and grieve upon their own account, tho' the strictest honesty and conscience meet with the severest treatment in this world; tho' they are the greatest losers and sufferers, when they practice the most glorious and rewardable virtues; tho' they have all the discouragement on the side of that righteous cause, of which themselves are the truest confessors and defenders: Such high virtues must have their reward; the justice of God will see to it; for their failing in this life makes it next to demonstration, that an abundant compensation, in an *exceeding weight of glory*, must be made in that which is to come.

(3.) In judging both of the sins and punishments of others, we ought to be very tender and charitable, and not upon every calamity conclude them the greatest of sinners, and hated of God; nay, tho' their end and death be very lamentable and dismal, not presently sentence them to hell: For we know not what powers of grace may fall upon them *in articulo mortis*, and what quick returns may be made by an humble expiring heart. We know not too, but that that punishment may be all; and that God hath pardoned the sin, tho' he doth not remit the temporal penalty. *David* had absolution sent him from God by the mouth of his Prophet, but the temporal punishment was to be retained and submitted unto. And in many instances in the *Old Testament* the offender hath

been reprieved : *I will not bring the evil in his days ;* but a reserve is made for a time to come. So we are utter insufficient judges of the nature and reason both of the sin and punishment.

Our Saviour upbraids the *Jews* with this harsh hard-hearted way of censuring, *Will ye suppose those Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, to be sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things ? Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners, above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem ?* No ! mind your own concerns, for *except you repent, you shall all likewise perish ;* intimating withal, that men may be greater sinners than these, and yet not fall by the like fate : as also, that they may not be the worst of sinners, and yet come to so unhappy an end.

Some of the good fathers of the Church have placed even *Ananias* and *Sapphira* in the kingdom of heaven, tho' they fell by so sudden and remarkable a stroke of death, and in so heinous a sin of such complicated guilt. It was fit so signal an example should be made of so great a transgression, in the first planting of the Church : but we ought, we know, and we may charitably think on that side, from their holy conversations that they are said to live before, and their good inclinations at that time, in their first donation to the use of the Church ; that it was all the punishment heaven design'd them, and that God pardoned them before he gave the stroke. It is cruelty, beyond common uncharitableness, to pro-

pronounce hardly upon any man's death, since we cannot be sure, whether that be a punishment or no: since that is a common fate, and oft-times sudden and remarkable upon good and holy men and women, and even sometimes in the exercise of their most pious acts. *There is a just man* (saith the Wiseman, Eccles. vii. 15.) *that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man, that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.* And yet we are apt to pass our verdict, indeed our doom, upon the *dying man*. Let us have a care of ill-natur'd, as well as superstitious censures in all such cases of punishment, lest we fall into the folly of the barbarous people (as St. Luke calls them) of *Melita*, who when a *viper fastened upon St. Paul's hand*, presently pronounced him a *murderer*, and vengeance had overtaken him: but when he shook it off, and felt no harm, they as foolishly chang'd their minds, and said that he was a God. *Acts xxviii. 30.*

(4.) Lastly, to conclude, Let us apply all the discoveries of divine providence, in relation to rewards and punishments, to our own advantage and improvement in knowledge and practice, for the establishment of our faith in God, and the certainty of his providence; and that we may live with those apprehensions always upon our thoughts, that God governs the world, and takes an account of all the actions of men, and will bring them to judgment. Had we no Scriptures, or divine revelation, to convince us of these things, we may by experience and daily observation

vation, see and behold the methods of God's dispensations. If we be righteous, we are upon a sure foundation; there are in store blessings for us and our posterity, the best legacy and inheritance we can leave them, a fair prospect to ourselves in this world, but a certainty for the world to come. But if we continue in unrighteousness, we and our posterity too (which the most wicked man cannot but wish to be happy) shall meet with the severest judgments from heaven according to our deservings, for *verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.* And the same God of his infinite mercy grant, that like himself (whose image we are) we may love righteousness and hate iniquity; that so we may be made partakers of those blessings of this life, whether of prosperity or severity, that he in his unerring wisdom shall judge useful and convenient for us; but above all, that we do not miscarry in the greatest end and design of our immortal beings, the everlasting glory and felicity of our most precious souls. *Amen.*



SERMON XXIII.

Preached in L E N T.

The Blessedness of Mourning.

MATT. V. 4.

*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall
be comforted.*

MOST of the beatitudes in this chapter run upon a figure they call an *Antithesis*, which opposeth contraries to contraries, and yet so as that they shall become reconcileable both to reason and truth. *Poverty of spirit* one would hardly guess, at first thought, should be a disposition of soul, fit for the acquisition of a kingdom. And *meekness*, either in *temper* or *practice* (if worldly men may be judges) would make but poor shifts towards the getting of a common livelyhood, and much meaner towards *inheriting the earth*. So likewise we may fear, that the most powerful perswasives from
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this place (I may be sure at this time) are likely to prove very ineffectual towards the engaging of men upon a disconsolate estate of *mourning*, in order to the attainment of the highest comfort and satisfaction. And yet however, as *humility* (which is that *poverty of spirit* here entitled to the kingdom of heaven) hath without design made higher achievements, and taken surer steps towards honour and advancement, than the most designing pride, or the most soaring ambition; which commonly misses its ends by hasty politicks, or God's judgments, and catches the most frequent falls.

Again; As *meekness* and *sedateness* both in temper and practice have often-times proved more successful, even in worldly matters, than the boisterous and over-reaching projectings of avarice and ill-nature; and have always arrived sooner at full contentment of soul, which is the best and truest happiness, and more than an equivalent to the possession of the whole earth: So, in like manner, we have fair hopes of extraordinary supplies of comfort and consolation, that may be raised from a disconsolate estate of *mourning*, upon this very reason, because it is such a one, as is so very necessary to beget in us those most excellent dispositions of *humility* and *meekness*, which on both sides of the Text are intitled to the most transcendent blessings that can be given; the *kingdom of heaven* and *the inheritance of the earth*: The prospect of the former, and the possession of the latter (or in its stead a contented resigning mind) can-

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not fail of the truest and sublimest consolation and felicity that is attainable in this life.

But *mourners* are not very apt to be ruled by *reason*. Despondency and dejection of mind, are what they love to indulge, and so will not easily be perswaded, that joy and comfort can be the possible effect or product of a disconsolate condition: (We must therefore refer them to the promises in the Text, which is better assurance, made by the Son of God, who by his own sorrows hath purchased infinite joys for us, and out of ours is all sufficient to raise the highest satisfactions, so as to make it good, that they that truly *mourn*, shall surely *be comforted*. And so I come to the words of the Text, and shall trouble you with no more division than what is visibly contained in them, which consists of two parts, *viz.*

I. The qualification for the blessing promised, which is a state of mourning. *Blessed are they that mourn.*

II. The blessing promised; *for they shall be comforted.*

Under these two heads, we may comprehend, *1st*. All the occasions and circumstances of *mourning*; who are to be looked upon as *true mourners*; who may, and who are such as must not, expect this blessing of consolation. And likewise, *2^{dly}*. What is the nature of that comfort, whether present or to come; and when, and how,

how, the conveyance of that blessedness shall be made, to those that have rightly mourned.

I. The qualification for the blessing promised, which is a state of mourning. *Blessed are they that mourn*, or *tristitres*, *lugentes*, or *qui lugent*. The original word that signifies *mourners*, if we may rely upon the guesses of *criticks* and *etymologists*, is deduced from, or hath some affinity, to some other words, that denote either *labour* or *struggle*, or poverty or great dejection, a sorrow that strikes very *close* and *deep*, and is not easily removed, all that is melancholick and direful, at a great distance from comfort and consolation: so that the case is very bad and deplorable; we must have great assistances from heaven, and there must be the concurrence of our own strenuous strivings and endeavours, to lift us up out of this state of depression.

Now, that we may understand our case and condition, in order to our cure and comfort, we ought to enquire into the origine, and into the occasions of our *mourning*: If they be both from ourselves, as we know whom to blame, so one would think, we should know how to prevent or remedy. God who doth not *delight to grieve the children of men*, hath not consigned us over to such a state, as is in itself irresistibly mournful and calamitous. 'Tis true, upon the fall, our condition is much the worse; happiness is not essential to our *beings*, or inseparable from our *human* estate, as it might have been,
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had not our first parents made the forfeiture : Our degeneracy in a natural line, descended from theirs ; and if by our own actual transgressions and frequent lapses, we still fall lower, it is no wonder that as *sin aboundeth, so likewise the concomitant and consequent evils do much more abound.* But as there was no fatal necessity laid upon them to commit sin, so there is none upon us to be miserable in this world or the next : For we have not only liberty and the greatest encouragement too, to wise and virtuous actions, but room still for great degrees of happiness ; at least for true peace and contentment, which is the extract and essence of that happiness, and is only to be acquired by wisdom and goodness : Virtue cannot be the cause of sufferings, tho' virtuous men do often suffer ; nor can we justly call God the author of our calamities, tho' they are laid upon us by his permission, and sometimes inflicted by his immediate hand ; because virtuous and holy men have their frequent lapses and sometimes greater falls : for God, who is their father, as well as an absolute Lord, cannot let them escape without due chastisement and seasonable admonition : And virtue and piety, after a taint and miscarriage, must be refined by a fiery trial ; and thereby be made more illustrious, and come off with triumph. It is notorious, and needs no farther proof, that great and crying sins are first or last marked out with great and signal judgments ; but we must take notice too, that those gentler *chastisements* and corrections, which are marks of favour and fatherly love from

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from God, and tokens of legitimacy on our part, that we no *bastards*, as the Apostle distinguishes in very plain terms, *Heb. xii. 8.* but *true born sons*, are all inflicted upon us for our sins, and there is no possible coming at comfort till the cause be removed. Our mournings and bemoanings will of course be everlasting, unless the sins which brought the punishment be pardoned, and we have passed into another road of walking according to true religion and *wisdom, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace.*

We must make therefore some distinction amongst our *mourners*, and exclude from that number and society (as it was done at the wedding in the gospel, *Mat. xxii.*) those that have not on their proper *mourning weeds*. The sentence there was, ver. 13. *bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*; for indeed, why came he there, with a rude squallid and unseemly dress, and perhaps as irregular and troublesome behaviour, to disturb the company that designed to be decently and innocently merry? How suitable and proportionate is the same condemnation, upon those *irreverent mourners* that are not *cloathed with humility*, that disturb the world with their *clamours and complaints*, of the grievances and hard usages that they meet with, of the afflictions and distresses that they are under, but have not put off their filthy habits of sin and uncleanness; whom as the Psalmist expresseth it (*Pf.*

lxxiii. 61.) *Pride still compasseth about as a chain, and violence covereth them as a garment.* These are by no means qualified for comfort; they have not on their proper *mourning* garments, the dispositions and deportment of a sorrow that is serious and earnest, they have not, with holy *David*, *Psal.* lxxx. 10, 11. *Chastened their souls with fasting, nor made sackcloth their garments*; have given no indications of a penitent and contrite heart. What should be done with such reprobate mourners as these? as they take no course to put an end to their mournful complaints in this world, so they are very likely to pass into the other, with great additions and aggravations, even to that doleful estate of outer darkness and blackness for ever, where shall be *weeping and bewailing* to all eternity.

There are several sorts of these irregular mourners that have put themselves at the utmost distance from all comfort and consolation, of which there are three ranks we may observe are very notorious. As,

1. There are those desperate wretches, that have indeed nothing about them, but what is very desolate and calamitous: Such as by an impetuous course of vitious living have pulled down upon their heads all manner of misery and ruin, and have sunk themselves into the most wretched and abject condition of poverty and distress. These indeed may be the objects of pity and commiseration, tho' deserving but little charity, because the greatest is ill bestowed upon them, and proves insufficient either to re-

claim them, to raise them, or amend them: By a certain sort of self-love very monstrous, and indeed unnatural, they indulge themselves in their own misery; many mournful and doleful complaints they make, sometimes perhaps with howling prayers and supplications for relief, but more often with bitter curses and execrations, like fallen devils, or some mortals as ill-natur'd, infected with the plague, they cherish their own torments or diseases, with all wishes and endeavours, to bring all others near them into the same society of desperate mourners. These may be said to mourn very sensibly as to pain, as to all circumstances that are truly grievous and calamitous; but we can give them no hopes of the *blissing* in the *Text*; they contribute nothing to their own comfort, they take no pains to attain to it in this world, by honesty and industry, by repentance and turning unto God, who is able and willing to raise them up: And as to the next world, such wretched souls can surely never pass from a filthy estate of sadness and dissolute mourning into mansions of the sublimest joy and bliss; more likely, and more resembling their preceding condition, will their portion be with those damned spirits in that melancholy eternity, to whom is reserved the *blackness of darkness for ever*.

2. There is another race of *desperate mourners*, somewhat superiour to these; who yet seem to have put a bar to all comfort and consolation; such as are in a very good and more than competent condition, as to all that with reason is de-

desirable and comfortable in this life : They have vast numbers below them, that are in much narrower, and more mournful circumstances ; and comparatively a much less number above them that are in a more plentiful condition, and have better appearances of enjoyment. The former they overlook, and will not put the cases together, or compare conditions ; but on these in the higher station they cast their envious eyes, and make their repining reflections ; and hence are all the grievances, the sorrow and vexation of their spirits. These are true and constant *mourners*, not only for themselves, but on the account of others also ; that their neighbours have any thing at all ; and ever in their esteem they have too much. They are murmurers too against the proceedings of God's providence : Every addition to another's happiness, is a grievous diminution of theirs ; what benefits accrue to others, are deplorable losses to themselves, and they inwardly repine at them, as tho' some heavy judgment had befallen them. And so they invert or quite cross the good natur'd rule of the Apostle St. Paul, *Rom. xii. 15.* for they do truly, and most pathetically *weep and mourn* with them that do *rejoice* ; and if they have any respite of joy and comfort, it is when others mourn and weep. These are very fordid wretches, always complaining ; whose careful looks, meagre and eagre aspect, upon all that is within the compass of their thieving eyes and rapacious desires, do shew them to live in the most wanting, craving, and joyless condition,

which certainly must be the most grievous state of *mourning*. And they never get out of it to the last gasp, till they have brought their *gray hairs with sorrow to the grave*: (For covetousness seldom expires till the last breath) and then drop into an abyis of everlasting misery and torment, as insatiable as themselves, where *the worm dyeth not*, and *the fire is unquenchable*; as the one was generated, and the other kindled in this world, so shall they be perpetuated for ever and ever.

3. There is yet a higher rank of *mourners*, than both these, and the worst of all the three, that are a daily plague and vexation to themselves, by their incessant endeavours to be so to other men, that have the world more at will, and have nothing to complain of but their own cursed tempers; that have plentiful possessions, but their own ill-nature will not give them leisure to enjoy them.

These are the men of *malice* and *revenge*, the avowed professors of those hellish braveries: *Revenge* (the Poet * says in the revenger's name) *is the most delightful thing*: And doing ill-offices may possibly throw in upon them some pleasing intervals of satisfaction, when their malice hath made some prizes: But, like those that are made by thieves and robbers, (another sort of cut-throats) all is soon spent and consumed in one jollity, and they must return to the same trade again. Disturbance and disorder are visible in all their actings, and could you look into the inward recesses of their souls, there is nothing but anxi-

* *Vindicta bonum vitâ jucundius ipsâ.*

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ety and horreur: they are under the torture the Poets feign that *Jupiter* inflicted upon *Pro-metheus*; malice (like that ravenous *bird* of prey tearing his liver) continually in like manner gnawing and feeding upon their entrails. And if their torment prove eternal, it is but the continuance (with great increase indeed) of that they first inflicted upon themselves, tho' with most spiteful virulency designed against others.

The resemblance of the sin and punishment is plain and remarkable, and they stand for ever condemned by their own *lex talionis* (*neque lex est justior ulla, &c.*) their own law of retaliation, the exercise of which they have most unjustly usurped: The revengeful, the unmerciful, they that can never forgive, shall never escape the righteous judgment of God, to whom alone *vengeance belongeth*, and whose essential attributes are infinite justice with goodness.

Thus I have endeavoured in some principal instances to separate off the ungodly *mourners* (at least the worst of them) from the society of *true mourners*; who, notwithstanding their deplorable condition, as to all that is truly dolorous and mournful, can never as such be qualified for the *blessing* our Lord hath promised to those that truly and rightly mourn: *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

Our next enquiry then must be after that blessed society of *holy mourners*, that by their religious deportment under their sufferings, and upon all occasions of *sorrow*, do keep themselves still within the reach of God's favour, and

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sometimes by their answerable behaviour, get farther into it than ever they were before.

Such are those that *mourn* with a deep sense of their own unworthiness, and God's great goodness as well as justice: They examine the reasons and occasions of their *mournful* condition, and then fall to consideration and reflection, and presently perceive the hand out of the cloud, that the severity is from heaven, but withal as soon discover it to be a necessary act of grace and mercy. And the next thought puts them upon examining the course of their lives; and finding that to be made up of many sins and miscarriages, they are not to seek for a reason why the chastisements of their heavenly Father are upon them. This casts them into extreme sorrow and humiliation, but not into despair: They visibly perceive a distinction of favour betwixt their sufferings (tho' very sharp and pungent) and those vials of wrath, oftentimes to final destruction, that are poured forth upon incorrigible and persevering transgressors: According to those marks of difference, which St. *Paul* with a certain exultation of spirit discovered in his own (much sorer) afflictions and persecutions. 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.*

By these serious considerations, they begin to wipe all tears from their eyes, and then they have some glimmerings of comfort, and do more plainly see their way before them, how to walk
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more uprightly and surely in wisdom and religion, both for the preventing the like calamities, and the better securing the favour of God, who hath been so justly provoked to wrath and indignation. And tho' the rod be taken off, they do not fall into jollity and forgetfulness, but upon apprehensions of their *often infirmities*, how subject they are to failures and frequent lapses, they keep themselves within the decorum of a certain mournful behaviour, tho' with an allowable cheerfulness of countenance, and be sure a great inward comfort and satisfaction of mind.

And so *mournfulness* here, which is thus rewardable with comfort, is taken for such a frame of mind, and such a way of behaviour and conversation as is sedate, serious and thoughtful: and truly, if we look about us both at home and abroad, we shall not find much reason or occasion to be over-jocund and merry. Our own, sins call for daily humiliation and mourning: and I believe, every considering Christian will own that every hour of the day, repentance is a duty requisite and obliging, and never unseasonable; and tho' not shewn in any outward act of exercise, yet must be kept alive and moving in the inward disposition of our souls: and that always implies a continued sort of sorrow and contrition of heart. So that for mirth and pleasure we should in truth have but little leisure as well as occasion; and yet it is commonly our labour and study how to contrive the spending our time, without the least mixture of a serious sorrow.

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And as we have no reasons or occasions at all for pleasures and forgetfulness, if we look home and consider the state and condition of our souls that are immortal, and cast but an eye towards that dismal eternity that is before us, which as yet we have made but very little provision for: so if we look abroad, we are surrounded with all the most calamitous * spectacles and mournful objects; the judgments of God are every day going forth, and the destroying Angels have a long time been among us. Surely we cannot but be sensible of these publick miseries, for we are every day complaining and grieving at them; that is, as far as amounts to murmuring and repining, a sullen and angry discontent; but alas! they have not brought us down to the true state of *mourning* and *humiliation*, a right *godly sorrow*, which we must pass through before we can come to the blessings of joy and comfort, of peace and deliverance. A perpetual *Lent* and mortification, no longer confin'd to a certain number of days, to be spent in a boundless sorrow and humiliation, in a continual mourning, fasting and praying will scarce up to a just proportion with the dreadful evils and sufferings we complain off. And yet, pray mark it, it is an observation that stares in our faces: pride and luxury in all manner of sensual appearances are at a greater height, than ever they were in any times of prosperity, plenty and peace; especially in those instances of feeding and cloathing

* Preach'd in the time of Wars abroad, and furious and tumultuous parties and factions at home.

ing the body, and pampering the lusts of the flesh, from whence indeed arise our greatest calamities.

Can ever mortification be more useful and suitable, than in our present circumstances? both to reconcile us to our God, and to retrench now in our extreme necessities, the vain and extravagant expences of a dissolute life. Vice is the worst of ill-husbandry: Christianity in its true practice of humiliation will fill up our funds and treasures, it truly requires very great mortification at home to maintain and keep up our armies abroad. In primitive times, one of the chiefest reasons and motives for *fasting* was; that what they could possibly with-hold from the nourishment of the flesh, should be sequestred, especially at these set times of *humiliation to charitable* uses. We have at this time, besides that indispensable duty, other necessary uses, more pressing than were ever known, for the strictest, that is, the most thrifty mortification. And as this will prove the most happy expedient to make up our losses, and toward the cure of our temporal grievances; so it is no less than what God must indispensibly require of us, in our mournful condition: not when his judgments are upon us, that we should wantonise in all manner of extravagancies, for they will soon turn into final destruction; but that we should be serious and considering, and by the most pensive and mournful deportment, we should shew extraordinary tokens of our sorrow and humiliation for the exceeding provocations we have given, and for the hot displeasure
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and indignation we have so justly raised. For, I pray observe it again, that God doth not lay greater stress (if indeed so great) upon his especial favours and mercies, than upon his judgments and corrections. If the former be abused and turned into wantonness, the ingratitude must be very provoking, and call for another method of proceeding; and he must fall to the use of the latter, that is severity, and all tokens of his indignation, in suitable punishments and chastisements: but if those proceedings too come to be disregarded and despised, and instead of mourning and humbling ourselves under his displeasure, we do, as 'twere, brutishly laugh at our own calamities: instead of mortifying ourselves, and restraining our lusts and wandering desires, we fall into all excesses of rioting and wantonness; This certainly must be the higher provocation, because it is the last of his methods to reduce sinners. For he first and generally tries men with mercy and loving-kindness, most genuine to that most delectable attribute of infinite goodness, that he might endear them by his favour, draw them over to him by the cords of love, and tye them by that which should be an inviolable bond, which is gratitude. But if that fail, he is forced, as we may say (for it is a certain violence upon the divine nature) to take another course of harsh and rigid proceedings; but if that fail too, what other method can be taken? It is the utmost tryal, and if ineffectual, the utmost provocation, and the last experiment that he will vouchsafe to make

make upon us. So that to rebel against God's mercies seems not so high a treason, as to rebel against his judgments: we call the former vile ingratitude, and in that we imply all manner of baseness and unworthiness, *Ingratum si dixeris, &c.* one would think we could call no act by a worse or more infamous name: but then ingratitude usually proceeds from incogitancy and forgetfulness, which we are apt to look upon as venial omissions, from a want of a due estimate of the benefits we have receiv'd, of which in time, and upon second thoughts, we may become more sensible. But incorrigibleness, is a depravation of the whole nature and morals: that man is to be cast out of the bounds of all mercy and commiseration; nothing more can be done to him, or for him. So much as this we may observe in all human proceedings towards inferiors, whether children, or servants, or those that are under authority. It is baseness and ingratitude when the indulgence and munificence of superiours is slighted, when they cannot oblige those that are under them to obey their commands, tho' it be their duty, and for their good, by all the kind words and persuasions they can use, and all the endearing favours and graces they can confer upon them.

But when such superiours are forc'd to make use of their authority in some severe methods of discipline and correction, and find that contemn'd and laughed at; the provocation must needs rise higher, as their guilt does, and no punishment can be too severe for such incorrigible offenders.

fenders. But we need not farther insist upon the distinction in our case, who on both sides are under the complication of the highest guilt, both ingrateful and incorrigible. Let us then seriously endeavour to answer these most obliging purposes of God, whether in pleasing or afflicting us, by putting ourselves into the closest mourning for our sins.

There is nothing so true in observation, and we may venture to say in this case so demonstrable upon the face of the earth, let *Atheists* and *Epicureans* object what they can, That as a nation grows and encreases in impiety, so it sensibly falls every day more and more under the displeasure of heaven, signalized by such wonderful judgments from thence, which cannot possibly be the natural effects of sin. *Shall not I visit for these things*, saith the Lord; *shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* Jer. v. 29. And this proof and demonstration of divine providence is not more visible in the publick, than what may be discovered with easy observation by every private person, in the common passages and transactions of his own life: That there is no signal punishment that ever befalls him, but what he can pair with some one or more sins that are as remarkable, and in a plain line and track can trace back the judgment of God upon him to some provocation that he hath first given. *As I have done, so God hath requited me*, was the sensible reflection of an Heathen King long ago. (*Judges i. 7.*) And there are few great or private persons, but might

might have made the same in the various turns and occurrences of their lives.

Thus on all sides of us we have such continued successions of doleful accidents and sorrowful remembrances, that we ought indeed never to go out of mourning, we never want occasions of bemoaning ourselves for something or other. And in truth, chastisements and afflictions are of such absolute necessity in our case, that if God with-holds his hand, we have a command to afflict ourselves, by the strictest rigours of mortification, rather than we should not be humble. In imitation of our great Lord and Saviour, whose example and precepts, if we may be allowed to set boundaries to them, were wholly included in this single but most comprehensive virtue of humility. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* And these several qualifications which are here in this chapter, entitled to their distinct approporioned beatitudes do all concentre in this one grace or virtue of humility: *Blessed be sure are the humble* for they shall obtain, *inherit, possess every one of these promised blessings.*

The most mourning estate is then the most happy one, that shall make us throw off all pride and forgetfulness, and reduce us to a serious and thoughtful humility. And therefore, as absolutely necessary to learn this lesson, our Saviour likewise was the original example to us of sorrow, as the first and chiefest *mourner* in our solemn Christian procession of humiliation; so that mourning, the deepest we can put on, is
infe-

inseparable from our religion, the very foundation of it: It was laid in blood, the *blood of the immaculate lamb* that was *slain from the foundation of the world*, whose sorrows and sufferings, the deepest that were ever inflicted on this side hell, I shall have farther occasion to represent.

In the mean time, let us consider, that tho' his death proved all victory and triumph to us over our greatest enemies, and is to enstate us in the possession of the truest, the immense, even everlasting comforts: yet will we not with tears bemoan his doleful lot, that the innocent must die, that the guilty might go free? It was necessary, it seems, that one should die for the people; and will not all the people of the world mourn that the Son of God coming among them, and becoming one with them, should be that only innocent one, singled out to be made a sacrifice for their sins, who himself was the only one upon the earth that had no sin?

The original word in the Text for *mourners*, I find is more peculiarly appropriated to *mourning* upon the death of friends or nearest relatives, *Moror ex morte amicorum*; will we not own him in that relation? who hath acted infinitely beyond all human measures and boundaries of friendship: he hath dyed for his very enemies; and his immediate persecutors and executioners were not excepted out of the pardon that he purchased by that death: They had his last prayers, that his father might forgive them too: And yet *greater love the world before, never knew than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends.* Let

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Let us then, as at this time we are more especially called upon, on the prospect of our Lord's bitter death and passion, which ought to be preceded by the most solemn *mourning*, rouse up this sensible friendly passion of sorrow above all the rest. It gives the most unquestionable testimony of our deepest concern, and in relation to all our grievances, our sins. We cannot in our case be guilty of immoderate sorrow, nay, the higher it rises, the nearer approach we make to the blessing of comfort; as the shedding of tears gives vent to the passion of grief, and often-times the greater ease and relief to a sorrowful heart, till at last all bears up towards comfort and satisfaction. St. Paul hath sensibly discovered the gradation and ascent, *Rom. v. 3. &c.* how sorrow well grounded did by degrees rise up into joy and consolation: *We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.* When it once comes to hope and the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, under the conduct of the holy Spirit; there is a fair prospect of, or rather an entrance upon the blessing in the *Text*, that they that truly mourn, shall most surely be comforted.

I should now proceed to the second part of the words which are of greater consolation: but they will take up more time than now remains, therefore must refer them to another opportunity.

Now

Now to God, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, all Honour, Majesty and Adoration now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON XXIV.

Preached on Good-Friday.

The Blessedness of Mourning.

MATT. V. 4.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

WE have already from these words, enquired into the state of *mourning*, the greater difficulty remains to find out the *comfort*. Sorrow and trouble are near at hand on all occasions; comfort lies at a greater distance, and when in some proportions attainable in this life, it is (as we usually speak in difficult matters) to be fetch'd as 'twere out of the fire: out of afflictions and fiery tryals; to be wrought off, as St. Paul prescribes the operation by the powers of *patience and experience and hope*

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hope on our parts; and then with divine assistance, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us.

Now our Lord hath promised an absolute comfort to those that mourn; we may confide in his word; the failure must be charg'd upon ourselves, if we do not bear up with wisdom and resolution in our mournful estate.

Poverty of spirit is entitled to the kingdom of heaven, and *meekness* to the inheritance of the earth, by him that hath the absolute donation of those two ample blessings. And often-times we find by experience (as I have already shewn upon this subject) that those two qualifications (how low and mean soever they may appear in the esteem of worldly men) come off with better success, always with greater satisfaction of mind, than the boisterous practices of a proud and haughty spirit. For why was it, that our Saviour so kindly invites all men to follow his example, *Mat. xi. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light?* Why, I say, of all things should he prescribe *lowliness* and *meekness* in temper and practice, as the likeliest means to lift us up under all pressures and sorrows, but that it is such a disposition and behaviour as will make every yoke and burden *easy* and *light*, and bring *rest* unto our souls?

We have no reason then to despair in any state

ners, the vilest indeed of all the three, the *men* of *malice* and *revenge*: who may be said to go mourning all the day long in the tragical pursuit of their merciless designs; the success of which may possibly give them some little respites of enjoyment; but alas! their desires like those of the covetous are insatiable; the filthy unclean spirit of malice, soon returns with greater powers like that in the gospel, *Mat. xii.* and their estate is still worse and worse, and the vent of their ill-nature doth but make way for new engagements as dolorous and vexatious.

I have already given some account of these ungodly mourners, which I have proved without the strain of a *metaphor* to be truly such; that they do even indulge themselves in a deplorable estate, made up of sorrow and the worst vexation of spirit; without any present solid comfort, and indeed with an utter renunciation of all to come. And thus having shut off from the society of all *godly mourners*, these and all other miscreants, all base tempers and servile spirits, who have industriously brought themselves under all the evils both of sin and punishment, and can have no prospect of this blessing of comfort promised by our Saviour to those who rightly mourn; We are now to reconcile a state of mourning to a state of comfort; in order to which we must enquire into

I. The nature, occasions, and due qualifications of that state of *mourning*, that shall produce *comfort*. And,

II. The

II. The ways and means, how *comfort* may be raised even from a disconsolate and dejected state of *mourning*.

I. Of the nature, occasions, and due qualifications of that state of mourning that shall produce comfort. To compose ourselves to a right *mournful* frame and disposition of soul in order to *comfort*, we must enquire after the cause and occasion of our sufferings, and that at first thought might easily be discovered. For reason and conscience quickened by punishment will soon find out, that sin is the general cause or occasion of all our grievances. And tho' indeed they are very commonly the immediate effects of folly or imprudence, which we will not always allow to be sinful; yet if we closely examine the matter, and look seriously into the estate of our lives, we shall hardly be able to discharge those acts of indiscretion from sin, or a very near relation to it: and if we can, we may easily discover, that our follies and miscarriages have very providentially brought us upon those punishments that our sins have long since deserved.

The same reason and conscience, becoming so very sensible of the evils that we are under, and of the guilt from whence they do arise, must necessarily suggest to us, that there can be no way of removing these evils, but by getting into the favour of God, whom we have displeased; and we cannot but naturally know, that humiliation and a sorrowful behaviour for our offences, together with an actual reformation of our lives, is the absolute and universal method to ingratiate

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ourselves with all superiors that are just and good; whose laws and authority we have any ways violated or offended. And so then as soon as we have engaged in this mournful deportment, and resolutely fix'd ourselves in an holy and virtuous course of living, we shall have an immediate prospect of comfort. We know our heavenly Father will be reconciled: humiliation of our souls, and reformation of our lives, are just letting us in to all the enjoyments of his grace and favour.

The methods of this mournful behaviour, both under publick and private calamities, and what repentance of our sins and change of our lives is required of us; I have more particularly endeavour'd to lay before you in my former discourse, and so I now pass to our second enquiry.

II. How comfort may be peculiarly raised, even from a disconsolate and dejected estate of mourning. And that perhaps you may be more clearly convinced of, if you reason with yourselves upon these three following observations.

(1.) That *mourning* is so genuine and congruous to our human estate, that we do not rightly enjoy the comforts of this life without a due mixture of it.

(2.) That *mourning* is necessary, and oft-times very seasonable to exercise our reason, and put us upon consideration and reflection; for our improvement in wisdom and virtue, in which happiness (the completion of all comfort) doth consist,

(3.) That

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(3.) That *mourning* is such an acceptable disposition of soul, and such a good-natur'd exercise of our passions, as doth lay as 'twere an obligation upon heaven to inspect and commiserate our condition; and doth entitle us to the highest rewards and promises in the holy Scriptures.

1. That *mourning* is so genuine and suitable to our human estate, that we do not rightly enjoy the comforts of this life, without a due mixture of it. Our human estate is made up of such a continued succession of doleful occurrences, that we never want occasions of bemoaning ourselves for something or other. It hath been observed, that there is nothing in the world but may administer an occasion of sorrow: Music itself, and that which is the most delicate and ravishing, will often-times dispose us to melancholy and thoughtful apprehensions, which perhaps is its best operation. Entire and complete joys, without interruption, without any mixture of disturbance, are reserv'd for the world to come, and more peculiarly for the true mourners in this life, those that have managed their sorrows and sufferings according to the purpose of God that afflicted them. Nay, so inseparable is sorrow from our mortal estate, that we are not able to raise ourselves to an ecstasy, without an injection of some mournful passages or circumstances.

Joseph (no doubt of it) was ready to burst with excess of joyful thoughts and apprehensions, at the sight of his brethren, at the hearing the good news of his father and his affairs,

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the happy opportunity then put into his hands of serving his family, to which he had been once thought to be of no use. All the lucky turns and hits of providence that any heart could desire or wish for: That he should be so unnaturally sent out of the way by his brethren, with hopes, no doubt, or rather assurance, that he would utterly be destroyed, or never come to light again: And yet now they should be brought to make their obeisance to him; that they should design him in their kindest thoughts for nothing higher than a slave, and yet now he should prove their Redeemer; a bond-man in *Egypt*, and yet now should become the greatest Lord in that court. Notwithstanding all these ravishing occurrences of providence, just as it came to the highest point of exaltation, the very crisis of most rapturous delight, and the most desirable sight of his beloved brother *Benjamin*, he was not able to contain himself, or bear the exceeding transport of joy, without *mourning*. The Text says, *His bowels did yern upon his brother, and he sought where to weep; and he went aside into his chamber, and wept there*, Gen. xliii. 30. And then chap. xlv. when it came to the full discovery, it is said, that *he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard him, and he wept upon Benjamin's neck, and Benjamin wept upon his neck, in the enravishing embraces of one another. Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them*: So that the most joyful congress or interview that was ever read of in history; the hap-

happiest meeting of friends or acquaintance, that the heart of man could ever wish or conceive, was carried on by a consort of *rejoycing, weeping* and *mourning*.

And thus stand our affairs in this world, into which, they say, we make our very first entrance with tears; and the scene is commonly continued through the infant — (the only innocent part of our age) to our riper years, in many tokens and natural indications of a future sorrowful estate, in wanting and wailing, and complaining; till our reason and understanding come to interpret the meaning, and make out the moral, to shew us, that nothing that is truly comfortable and valuable in this world, is to be obtained without labour and struggle, and sorrow: And then religion will farther inform us, that our immortal souls dwelling in these bodies of sin and corruption, must be refined by some dolorous and searching discipline, either inflicted by God, or exercised upon ourselves in sorrow and humiliation (a lawful and pious penance) before they can pass into everlasting joy and serenity.

I have given you an instance, and we find it true enough from our own experience, that mourning is an ingredient that cannot be left out in the highest compositions of delight and enjoyment: All pleasures without this savoury mixture, would be too luscious and surfeiting; nay, that even an extacy and transport of joy is too much for our natures to weild, without the comforting-allaying-relief of weeping and bewail-

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wailing: So that tears are of use and necessity to give vent and comfort, not only to a sorrowful, but also to a rejoicing heart.

From which we may conclude, that it is mourning, not rejoicing, that is most essential to our human estate: The latter seems forced (and that is the poorest sort of joy, or indeed none at all) and we have but very rare occasions for it: But the former is suitable to, and comforting, and naturally flows from every passage and circumstance of our lives. Did not the Holy *Jesus*, the mournful Saviour of the world, take upon him our whole natures? and yet he took none of our joys, none of our comforts; (those and sin were excepted) as tho' they did not of right belong to that human nature he had assumed. He was so angry at sin, and his sorrows so big, that the world could not get one laugh or smile from him through his whole abode and conversation upon earth. He drank off that *bitter cup*, but the other of joy, *the fruit of the vine*, he reserved by assignation for a happier meeting, to drink with his Disciples and followers in his *Father's kingdom*.

Glory and triumph were immediately due upon his victory over sin and death, but the solemnity was not proper for this world. The foundation of his Church, notwithstanding his triumphal Resurrection and Ascension, must be laid in sorrow, and blood, and tribulation. To *mourning* we owe all our comforts, for we owe our salvation to it. The sorrows and sufferings of Christ were the efficient and meritorious cause

cause of our restoration to the capacities of everlasting joy and felicity: And therefore were they laid upon him with such exceeding pressure and pungency (how can we overlook the divine purposes in them?) to answer and make full satisfaction to the vindictive justice of God, to be commensurate in value to all the punishments to which sin hath made us liable, and to purchase for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

To raise our contemplations upon this melancholy subject, I shall endeavour the representation of these most wonderful sorrows and sufferings from the holy Scriptures. The evangelical Prophet *Isaias*, speaks like a Disciple or an Apostle, like one that had been an eye-witness from the beginning of all that he did and suffered, in his 53d chap. which is the very extract of the gospel, in all that relates our Saviour's mournful sufferings, and the design of them, viz. That he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Surely (saith he) he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows; stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions: He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: He was taken from prison and from judgment. For the transgression of my people was he stricken: It pleased the Lord to bruise him: He

He hath put him to *grief* : He hath made his soul an *offering for sin* : And he himself hath *poured out* his soul unto *death* : He was *number'd with the transgressors*. He *bare the sin of many*, and *made intercession* for the *transgressors*.

And this prophesy is the very history of matter of fact ; the doleful representation of the most exquisite sorrows and sufferings, fully answered and completed in every passage of his life and death. Upon the apprehension of the latter, the Evangelists set forth his extraordinary agonies, which seized him by very powerful degrees. *He began to be sorrowful*, says St. *Matthew*. He *began to be sore amazed*, saith St. *Mark*, and *to be very heavy*, say both. The word in the original (as commentators have observed) expresses it more vehemently than our language can do : And *my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*. And then *he falls on his face* ; and as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* expresses it, *with strong crying tears makes his prayer unto him that was able to save him from death* : His humanity, the most tender and innocent (such as the world never knew but in him) was so *forely pressed*, that he could not forbear expressing his reluctance to what was already determined, and was to be the consummation of all he came about, without which our redemption had been utterly unfinished. And while he pray'd more earnestly, his *sweat* was, as 'twere, *great drops of blood* falling down to the ground : As the Psalmist so
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long before had made the representation; *I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels,* Psal. xxii. 14.

It is rational to conclude from these supernatural sorrows, that he was doing the great work of satisfaction for us. For if the sorrow and contrition of one single sinner ought to be exerted with the utmost remorse and bitterness of soul; how infinite and boundless must the grief and anguish be in him who had a full apprehension (as much as if they had been his own) of all the transgressions of so many millions of sinners! If we consider the perfection of his knowledge; he was fully acquainted with our grief, he knew all our guilt, ingratitude, and every aggravation of sin; and he was inflamed with the most ardent love, both to God and man; and so was zealous to retrieve and preserve that honour that had been violated, and to use the utmost means to restore man to grace and favour. And therefore the sorrows that every sinner should spend upon his own cause, and for his own transgressions, seem to be united into one mass and load, and laid upon the Saviour of the world, under which he must have sunk, as well as we under our sins, but that he was God and man. He bore *our griefs* and carried our sorrows, and so reached the end of a full expiation. His *agonies*, from the dignity of his person, being commensurate in value to all the sorrows that could be exerted by the whole race of mankind.

It was no cause of his own, 'twas ours, he mourned and died for us; what had the Son of God to sorrow for? who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners: And yet would not let us come into the least share with him: But we must keep our sorrows apart; *Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children*, as he spake to those mourners that followed him to the cross with lamentations: To denote that no man could come into that merit of satisfaction, he would take the whole upon himself.

But tho' he hath by his sorrows and sufferings made a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, yet no abatement is to be made in our sorrows, we must *weep for ourselves* too. The Apostle St. Paul speaks of *filling up that which is behind* of the afflictions of Christ *in his own flesh*, Col. i. 24. Not that Christ's sufferings were incomplete, being of infinite merit and value: Yet the addition of ours is so absolutely necessary, that we may safely pronounce, our redemption cannot be completed without them: We have no greater testimony too that we can give, that we desire the benefit of his sorrows: Will we not mourn with him that wholly mourned for us? Will we not sorrow for our own sins, which brought him that had no sin into the deepest agonies, and to the most painful and ignominious death?

In a word, our sins were the cause and occasion of that mournful tragedy, and till they

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are done away, renounced by our repentance, and the reformation of our lives, as well as expiated by his death and passion, there can be for us no comfort or consolation; but still the fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. Thus both nature and religion have determined this point, That mourning doth most suitably comport with our present mortal estate: That joy is commonly an excursion out of the rules and boundaries of both: and That there is no possible coming at true and solid comfort, the blessing in the Text, without sorrow and humiliation for our sins, a serious and mournful deportment of ourselves, through the whole course of our lives and conversations. All which may be transacted too with that cheerfulness of spirit, that shall keep off all noxious vapours of melancholy and despair from annoying us; and shall bring that inward satisfaction and consolation to our minds, as shall almost infinitely surpass all forced and glaring pleasures of wicked and worldly men. For as there is a godly sorrow that worketh repentance, so there is a godly joy that arises from thence, that they that truly *mourn shall surely be comforted.*

2. Our second observation was, That mourning is peculiarly necessary, and oftentimes very seasonable to exercise our reason, and put us upon consideration and reflection, for our improvement in wisdom and virtue, in which happiness itself, the completion of all comfort, doth consist.

Perhaps there had never been any such creature

ture in the world as a truly wise man, had there not been difficulties and disasters, disappointments and oppositions; and in a word, whatsoever is comprehended under our mournful estate; to discipline him, and train him up to that stature of prudence, wisdom and knowledge, which (if not infused) must be gained by such rudiments of experience.

And therefore do we often see, that even great men both in honours and riches, who have had too the advantages of sufficient natural parts and abilities, yet surrounded with flatterers, and wilful admirers, meeting with no checks or reproofs from those that might be their friends, no cross hits or unlucky, (indeed happy) accidents from the world, to exercise them sometimes in some vexation and trouble, in anxious thought and consideration; they become foolish and impertinent in all their discourses and actions, and by degrees degenerate into a brutish sensuality; because their liberties and enjoyments have been too entire, and of too long a continuance, and they have unhappily met with no doleful interruptions to improve them in wisdom and virtue.

As *Solomon* is said to have had his *wisdom* as an immediate gift from God, and he was thought worthy of such an endowment, because he had made it his option or *choice*, before all the glories and possessions of the world; yet this wisdom, tho' it descended from above, had been lost, or must have passed among the other vanities of the world, if it had not been kept

kept up and improved by difficulties and hard experience: For that reason doth he so often give *mourning* and *sorrow* the preference to all the grandeur, delights and enjoyments of a throne, in that very book wherein he pronounces every thing else to be *vanity and vexation of spirit*. It is *better*, says he, *to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting*; and that *sorrow was better than laughter*; that *by the sadness of the countenance the heart was made better*: That the *heart of the wise was in the house of mourning*, but the *heart of fools in the house of mirth*: And surely it was, because wisdom and sorrow so seldom go asunder, that he pronounces, *Eccles. i. that in much wisdom is much grief*; and *he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow*: They improve one another: Sorrow will make a man look about him and consider, and so become wiser for the future: And wisdom as it increases by experience, must look deeper into our own unworthiness and deficiencies, and sinfulness, and so still discover fresh occasions for our sorrow and humiliation.

David's both wisdom and virtue, with due allowance to the spirit and grace of God, was mostly owing to the mournful part of his life. In his *prosperity* he was unthinking, and often forgot himself; nay, fell into the most enormous impieties, and then under the severest judgments of God: But his *mourning* still restored him, and brought him into favour: And his sorrows and afflictions at last kept him from go-

ing astray. It was repentance that made him entirely *a man after God's own heart*: And when in this melancholy and mournful disposition of soul he came to consideration, and thought on his ways; then with all expedition *he turned his feet unto the testimonies of God, he made haste, and delayed not to keep his commandments.*

Thus doth a state of *mourning* awaken and sharpen our reason and understanding, and bring us to serious thought, reflection and resolution; and so is of greatest use to improve us in wisdom and virtue, in which the moralists and wisest Philosophers, thought that (*summum bonum*) chiefest good or happiness, the heathen sages so much enquired after, consisted.

Christian believers have better reasons to embrace that perswasion, who have an almighty Saviour, the Son of God, that hath promised and purchased the same by his own sorrows and sufferings, that they that *suffer with him, shall be glorified with him*; that they that rightly mourn, and are thereby become wise and virtuous, shall obtain the choicest blessings of comfort and consolation that this life can afford; and, that which is the completion of all, everlasting felicity in that which is to come; Which leads me to our last observation.

3. That mourning is such an acceptable disposition of soul, and such a good natur'd exercise of our passions, as doth lay, as 'twere, an obligation upon heaven, to inspect and commiserate our condition, and doth entitle us to the highest promises and rewards in the holy Scriptures.

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Some pious Saints have suspected their condition in this world, if made up altogether, or in too great a proportion, of prosperity and enjoyment; if they met with no rubs or difficulties in their way, or not occasion enough to exercise them in some seasonable intervals of sorrow and mourning; making this melancholy conclusion, that this exemption from evils, that this undisturbed enjoyment, may prove all their reward. Whate'er we may think of such superstitious fears, sometimes, no doubt of it, very groundless; because as the righteous are said to need no repentance, so some holy dispositions and tempers, need not those lashes of sorrow and affliction which are of absolute necessity to keep others in humility and obedience: Yet however, a great portion of godly sorrow must necessarily administer such inward satisfaction to the mind of every pious Christian, that he may very reasonably hope, that surely his angry father, who now chastises his child for his good, will at last receive him into greater favour; that he hath grieved and mourned the greatest part of his life, with that patience and submission he ought to shew; that certainly there must come a time, when all tears shall be wip'd away, and the God of all love and comfort shall give peace and rest to his soul.

As our Christian religion was founded in sufferings, so we have from thence the greatest assurance of a reward upon that account: That *if we suffer with Christ Jesus, we shall reign with him*: That *through tribulation we are to*

enter into the kingdom of heaven. Suffering with patience is the nearest and closest imitation of our Lord, and the most endearing, because all his sufferings were for our sakes. The higher our sorrows rise, the clearer view we have of comfort: what we usually pronounce on bad times, *when they are at the worst they will mend*, is true of our mournful estate; the more grievous our pressures, the nearer at hand is our relief and deliverance, if we can trust in God and rightly manage our grievances.

The malice of persecutors did ever make for true Christians. And the more vehement and inveterate our enemies are, the sooner they cast us into the embraces of God's favour and protection: Let them do their worst, they do but hasten our comfort and reward; our Saviour here in the close of these beatitudes, seems to be raised into an ecstasy, in giving forth his blessings with accumulation of reward, to those that are mightily oppressed and bore down by the hard usages and evils they meet with in this world, *ver. 11, 12. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you; and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake: Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.* These are the most pungent and vexatious circumstances of sorrow and mourning, and seem to be at the utmost distance from comfort; to be bore down by unmerciful violence and injustice: And yet are they but the greater occasions of *exceeding joy*. Alas! poor executioners of vengeance, the

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the vehemence and fury do but hasten the vindication and recompence.

This shall be the certain lot and portion of all religious mourners, the happy turn and revolution that shall be brought about : *They shall be comforted.* It may be they shall receive considerable portions of it in this life, to their glory and consolation, and to the vindication of God's providence, (which is always a particular joy to every pious soul) that men might see what compassion he doth shew to those that are such sensible mourners, under the evils he both in wisdom and goodness suffers to be laid upon them. But what harm ! if all be respited to another world that is to last for ever. Surely heaven may prove a sufficient comfort and compensation for all our mournings and bewailings in this life, *where St. John, who had an antevision, says, Rev. xxi. 4. all tears shall be wip'd away from mens eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain.*

Now, God of his infinite mercy grant, that our mournings and sufferings may be concluded with this life, that we may when we have finished our course, and kept the faith, be received into his everlasting joy and comfort in the life to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Holy Ghost, the great comforter, One God and three Persons, be ascribed, All Majesty and Adoration, now and for ever, *Amen.*

SERMON XXV.

The Blessedness of Meekness.

MATT. V. 4.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

OUR blessed Lord, as you read verse 1st. seeing the multitudes, went up into a mountain, that he might be the better both seen and heard, and maketh a Sermon to his Disciples or followers; and he needed to make but one, * for it was comprehensive of all that were ever since published to the world. And for the encouragement of his auditors, he beginneth it with beatitudes or blessings; telling them too of such qualifications, and the exercises of them, that should give them a title to those blessings, either on earth, or in heaven, or in both. For so he hath shared the whole universe, amongst the *poor in spirit*, the *mourners*, the *meek*; those that

* Vide. Dr. Hammond's Annotation.

that *hunger and thirst after righteousness*; the *merciful*, the *pure in heart*; the *peace-makers*; and those that are *persecuted for righteousness sake*, or reviled for the sake of him and his gospel.

But amongst them all, that the *earth* should fall to the lot of the *meek*, sounds so like a paradox, that one would be apt to fear might bring all the rest into question, amongst those that have snap'd their designs wholly for this world by other politicks, and think to carry it by an higher hand.

The *meek*! that are no ways cut out for the bustle of the world, and with the *weakest* are most times *cast to the wall*, are surely so unlikely to inherit all, that it will be well if they get a common share: The *meek* too! that in their desires, are least fond of the world; are not so eager and intent after the hunt of wealth or ambition; are indeed above the vanities, and glories, and pleasures of this life, and so unlikely and unskill'd to engage both in the fatigues and intrigues of pursuing such designs. It is strange, I say, that these should any ways come to be *heirs of the whole earth*. Surely God only can bring it about, and by his absolute and uncontrolable dominion make this vast settlement upon them.

Therefore be not solicitous how it shall be made good, ye that are *meek and lowly in heart*. Christ Jesus be sure must have the greatest love and kindness for you, because you come nearest to him of all his imitators and

followers — Take his word for it, it is most certainly meant for you. *Luke xii. 32. Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

Now the spirit of the Lord God is said to be upon *Isaiah*, because the Lord had anointed him to preach good tidings to the meek, *Ch. lxi. 1.* And no doubt but worldly men would think him the most lucky Preacher or Prophet, that could instruct them in the practice of such a virtue, as would give them a title to so fair an inheritance, as the possession of the earth. But tho' it be not the whole earth in a literal and rigid sense, you will be as contented, that is, if ye be of a meek and humble temper and disposition, with a lesser portion of it, as tho' you had the possession of the whole.

This indeed is commonly a very prevailing incitement, to have your reward in hand, far beyond the distant and too much distrusted promises of the next world; that any virtue should meet with a recompence upon earth, and that meekness above all the rest should carry away so great a prize. For the better clearing of the claim and title to so great an inheritance, such large demesns, we will enquire,

I. Who are the *meek*, and what is that gainful qualification and practice.

II. Of what nature is the blessing promised, *they shall inherit the earth.*

I. Of

I. Of the *meek*, and that gainful qualification and practice of a meek spirit and behaviour. *Πραΐς, mites, mansueti* : mild, gentle and easy to be intreated, by which is meant all that is contrary * to immoderate anger, wrath, malice, strife, revenge, sedition, nay, pride and greedyness of gain, catching after the honours and riches of the world; to all that is irregular and turbulent in ungovernable men. And let the men of bravery think what they please, these robust and blustering dispositions and practices ever lose ground, do commonly falter and miscarry, whilst meekness as harmless as the dove, uses the wisdom of the serpent, and with both, moves with less noise and flutter, and gets the truest possession of all things; because its desires are reasonable and easily satisfied, and its natural lusts and appetites are no longer vexatious in new pursuits, but can desist with quiet and contentment. It may well be entitled to so ample a reward, as being the most comprehensive virtue, implying the fairest and most grateful behaviour both to God and man, winning, as we may say, upon heaven and mankind : and then God be sure will take the peculiar care of such as are endowed with it, to give them the choicest inheritance, and it will be inhumanity in men to disturb them in the possession.

1. Because it is a temper of resignation; they cast their care upon God, and there is no greater obligation can be laid upon heaven, than to fix our trust there; and we have all over the Scriptures,

† Ἐραντία δὲ πρὸς θεοῦ ἐστὶν πρᾶξις φύσις. Plato.

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tures, the largest promises for that endearing trust. *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion, which can never be removed, but standeth fast for ever.* Psal. cxxv. 1. And he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about, Psal. xxxii. 10. So Psal. xxxvii. *Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily shalt be fed:* And again, *Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also unto him, and he shall bring it to pass.* And trust is so much encouraged Psa. lv. That we may thereby even rid ourselves of all the troubles and grievances of this life: *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.* And, *Isaiah lviii. 13,* faith the Lord; *he that putterh his trust in me, shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain.*

Now this is one good step toward a fair possession upon the earth, to get the interest of heaven on our side, by our meekness and submission to all the dispensations of providence: and the meek are ever of this confiding disposition. And it betokens no easy or credulous temper, but hath a rational foundation, an experience and right knowledge of God, owning him to be most merciful and most wise; as ever ready in all acts of goodness, so the best judge of times and persons, when and where, and in what proportion, to shew his mercy and loving-kindness. Therefore, says the Psalmist, *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.* Psal. ix. 10.

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This is the prime disposition of a meek man, a trust in God, and a resignation to the wise orders of his providence: and this must go a great way towards the blessing in the Text. The meek man will enjoy himself better than the high and lofty, for *no good thing will God withhold from him.* It is no matter what great things of pomp and state, of riches and honour are denied him: no good thing that the earth can afford, no true lasting and substantial good shall be withholden from him. Therefore, as our Saviour invited his followers to the practice of the highest and most complete virtues, when he said, *learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*; so he annexed the most transcendent reward, as great as the possession of the whole earth, or indeed what that alone can never afford, viz. *Ye shall find rest to your souls.*

Oh! the desperate horrors and disquietudes, those tearing furies that are ever and anon gnawing upon the souls of the rich, the great, the voluptuous, the passionate and outrageous, the malicious and revengeful, and no redress, (perhaps some little intermissions by as bad remedies) can be raised from all their possessions and enjoyments; no lasting support from their great and haughty spirits, no true quiet from their imperious insultings. Judge then, have not the *meek and lowly in heart* the fairest inheritance amongst all the children of men, that in defiance to all the vanities and vexations of the world can find rest unto their souls.

2. We are called upon by our Lord to learn of him this lesson of meekness and lowliness of

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of heart, upon the exercise of which the peculiar favours and blessings of heaven are engaged; because meekness of temper is a spirit and disposition truly divine, and cometh nearest to the image after which we were made. And God must necessarily love those that are most like to himself, and reserve his choicest favours for them. Indeed he is often describ'd as a God of *wrath* and *vengeance*, a *consuming fire*; but it is well known, and by happy experience found, that patience and forbearance, are his most delectable attributes, (if we may be allow'd to distinguish); he doth as 'twere go out of himself, whilst by the violent provocations of mortals he is rais'd into fury. We do not make our meek spirit, to be so heavy and passive, as to be clear of all anger and just resentment, but rather fittest to exercise, and put them in execution when occasion requires.

But as to God; how transcendent is his patience, and as we may call it, his meekness, towards the children of men! Considering how many damning, blaspheming, impious, atheistical defyers of heaven, there are amongst us, horrid monsters of impiety, open professors and abettors of lewdness and debauchery: and yet no fire from heaven upon them; they live and domineer, and go on in their wickedness, and glory in their shame. We ourselves are generally for immediate vengeance and execution: all flame and fury, if our good name or fortunes be but touch'd by little assailants, and in matters as little; how apt are we to cry out of the baseness and barbarity,
never

never such villany attempted or committed! And heaven must presently be alarm'd to countenance our malice and ill-nature, to concur with our revenge. But the meek and lowly in heart are of another manner of spirit: they can forbear and forgive and consider; they can put the case of God's dealings with themselves and all men, tho' provoked every day; they can raise themselves into a love of, and even passionate concern for their enemies; they can do good for evil; they can pray for their prosecutors and them that despitefully use them. This then is a disposition and behaviour that must necessarily bespeak the preference in the love and favour of God, and the bowels of Jesus Christ, because we act so like himself; and must give us a certain title to all the blessings even upon the earth, as he in wisdom and goodness shall lay out for us: And he can give them in lesser bulk, which in real and intrinsick value shall be commensurate to the possession of the whole earth. It was Satan's gross notion of felicity, that all *the kingdoms of the world and the glories thereof* must go to the making up of a great and happy man, when he offer'd them to our Lord, tho' not able to make good his bargain.

3. As thus meekness hath a certain claim to the peculiarity of divine favour, (and that must necessarily over-rule in all the difficulties and obstructions that are met with in the world) so is it of itself a virtuous disposition, that will in its own nature above all others make our lives serene and peaceable to ourselves. And is not
this

this an equivalent to the inheritance of the earth? *There is no peace to the wicked*, saith the Prophet from the mouth of God. *Isaiah lvii. 21.* And in the verse before: *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* And we find it so by experience, if we do but examine into the origine of our grievances and complaints upon all occasions.

Vice is the cause of all the calamities and disturbances of mankind, as well in private persons and capacities, as in publick societies; meekness must keep the peace all over the earth. But no man in the practice of any vice, can be said to be meek: For vice is rude and unruly, boisterous and turbulent; hath no contentment or peace at home or abroad. Whereas meekness disturbeth no man, and is very easy within itself. *St. James* hath discover'd the true origine of all such mutiny and contention, chap. iv. ver. 1, 2. *From whence come wars and fightings amongst you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust and have, not, ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.* And what is all this disorder and confusion, but for want of meekness of spirit and conversation?

We cannot indeed call Christian religion by a more comprehensive name, than an establishment of peace and meekness upon earth; so aptly and fully answering the prophecies concerning Christ: That *with righteousness* he should judge the poor, and *reprove with equity* for the meek of the earth: That the wolf should dwell with the

lamb,

lamb, and the leopard lye down with the kid; And the calf and the young lyon and the little fatling together, and a little child should lead them. Isa. xi. 4, 6. If by Christianity we are not tamed into meekness and peace, we are no more fit for Christ's flock, than those savage beasts are to be admitted amongst our common herds.

That short lesson, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, was the sum of the whole Gospel, of Christ's whole example and all his precepts, such a characteristick note of his office upon earth, that St. Paul addresses himself to the *Corinthians* by virtue of it: *I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.* 2 Cor. x. 1. and this was no diminution to the grandeur of his kingdom; he was ever cloathed with meekness and humility, even when he was shining in his greatest glory, when the multitude received him into *Jerusalem* with such *acclamations of joy* and loud *Hosannaes*, spreading their garments, and strowing green branches in the way; he took care that fulfilling of an old prophecy should remarkably be observ'd; by which meekness was to bear the chiefest part in the royal solemnity. *Tell ye the daughters of Sion, behold thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass*; as you have the relation *Mat.* xxi. and the quotation from *Isaiah* lxii. 11. and *Zechariah* ix. 9. and *Psal.* xlv. 3, 4. When the majesty and even terror of Christ's kingdom is set forth, it is thus represented: *Gird thy self upon thy thigh, O most mighty: with thy glory and thy majesty, and in thy majesty*

jesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness, and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. And as meekness adorns this kingdom of righteousness and glory, so is it indispensibly required in all the subjects thereof, even the *Ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*, which is in the *sight of God* of great price. 1 Pet. iii. 4. Thus meekness, mean and lowly as it may appear, is the glory of our religion; it is the preparative disposition for the practice of the highest virtues. Those exalted rules of mortality among the *Stoicks* were all pretence and shew, where meekness did not shine forth in every action: and the religion of the *Pharisees* was all nauseous and detestable hypocrisy, because pride and vain-glory were visible through all their specious appearances of holiness. And the *Sermon on the mount* was wholly unpracticable to them, when they could not learn one lesson, the first rudiments of Christianity, *meekness and lowliness of heart*. For indeed mortification, self-denial, taking up the cross of Christ, bearing persecution for righteousness sake, are all impossible commands, to the angry and froward, to the great spirits of the world, who value themselves upon the niceness of resentment, and the expedition of revenge; whilst the meek person by a truly more great and noble spirit dashes and confounds the malice of his adversary, proves too hard for all the evils that can assault him, or else in the truest sense of that vulgar motto (*vincit qui patitur*) overcomes by suffering. In general, what wonderful blessings would an universal meekness bring

bring upon the earth? Certainly an entire restoration of a golden age, if ever there were such a one in the world, real or feigned. Its principal qualification, is submission to parents and governours, to all that are in authority or superiority: And its obedience is ever so free and genuine as to admit of no reserves, no salvoes for rebellion; only at all times giving the precedence of obligation to the laws of heaven. Hereupon a very excellent and well-known commentator paraphraseth upon the Text. *Blessed are the meek, &c. i. e.* "The
" quiet spirited persons, and they that live in
" obedience to government for they ordinarily
" shall live quietly, and receive the protection
" and benefit of government, and invading no
" man's goods or life, shall generally enjoy
" long life and tranquillity in the earth: Or
" when the exercises of this virtue, in some
" singular conjunctures of time, bring losses or
" death upon them, they shall be richly reward-
" ed in another world, and be made amends
" abundantly there, for all that the practice of
" this virtue hath brought upon them."

And that meekness doth more especially consist in this tractable disposition towards government, farther appears from the likeness of the reward in the Text, to that in the 5th Commandment, wherein *obedience to parents* is so strictly enjoined, and to civil superiours necessarily imply'd; with promise, that *thy days shall be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*: That is, says the fore-mentioned

commentator, "A fruitful and prosperous being
" here on earth, which is said to belong by
" promise of God, peculiarly to the meek.

To complete the felicity of government in both relations; it is the happiest accomplishment too in a sovereign prince, and in all his subordinate magistrates; and then how quiet doth the possession of the earth become, the nearest in likeness to heaven itself! when meekness possesses the hearts of all, which (as the moralists distinguish that virtue) is clemency in the sovereign, and lenity in the subject.

Moses is represented as the *meekest* of all men, and yet by divine election was thought fittest to govern those turbulent spirits: and indeed he was not, upon occasion, without his just and angry resentments too, and that with warmth and zeal enough; as when he came down from the immediate converse and interview with God upon the mount, and saw the lewd idolatry of the people worshipping a calf, and dancing for joy about so lovely a god; his *anger waxed hot, and he casted the tables out of his hands and brake them: Even those that had been the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God*, *Exod. xxxii. 16. 19.*

And our Lord himself, a greater exemplar of meekness, whose entire character and doctrine it was, seem'd almost overcome with passion, as appears by the Disciples applying that of the Psalmist: *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*; when he made a *scourge of small cords*, and whip'd the *buyers and sellers out*
of

of the temple, and poured out the changers money, and overthrew their tables, John ii. 15, 17.

Meekness is not to intimidate governours, or to make them wholly passive and pusillanimous, but rather vigorous and active in all due methods of severity, when civil and religious laws and rights are violated and invaded, when the publick interest is postpon'd or disregarded, when injury and oppression are carried on with an high hand, when lewdness and profaneness are even insulting and domineering; and all manner of vice and irreligion are practis'd with licentiousness and impunity: Here the magistrate ought to bestir himself with undaunted courage and resolution, and yet is still obliged to keep a due temper and moderation: and meekness and equanimity may shew a fair aspect under the frowns and scourges of authority. So that meekness still will carry the most politick, successful, as well as religious pre-eminence. Nothing hath sooner brought monarchies and governments to a sad period and dissolution than cruelty and tyranny in princes, than sedition and faction in subjects, and turbulent zeal in the professors of religion; that is, all that is contrary to meekness, the sovereign preservative of all society. And, we may daily observe it, what a disturbance and confusion, doth sometimes one, but always a very few haughty, aspiring or contentious spirits, breed in an inferior society or neighbourhood, in all the company and conversation of the world.

Thus doth meekness so entirely discharge all

duties both towards God and man, for the keeping up both religion and good manners in the world; that certainly nothing that the earth can afford will be denied to the meek, since it is in the power of God to give, and whilst it is consistent with the good of them to receive temporal blessings. Having thus laid down the Qualification and Title, let us enquire

II. Of what nature is the Blessing. Κληρονομήσουσι τὴν γῆν: They shall inherit the earth, *jure mancipii, si non titulo hæreditatis*, says *Grotius*; if not by immediate inheritance, yet by purchase, which makes it a freehold, and denotes worth and merit in the obtaining. If this could be made good to the men of the world, we should see nothing but meekness and demureness in all their behaviour: But acting the part will not do, and true meekness and covetousness can never be joint purchasers in so ample an inheritance. We will examine how far the literal sense will hold it (the spiritual and eternal *blessings* will less be questioned) and then consider what other senses it may seem to comport with.

1st. As to the literal sense; no doubt it was so meant of old, as taken from the Psalmist *, *but the meek shall inherit the earth*, and shall delight *themselves in abundance of peace*; and blessings of the same nature are ensured to them in many Texts of the *Old Testament*. The *meek shall eat and be satisfied*: And the Lord *lifteth*

* Psal. xxii. 26. xxxvii. 11. cxlvii. 6. lxxvi. 9.

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lifteth up the meek, whilst he casteth the wicked down to the ground; and God is said to *arise to judgment to save all the meek of the earth*. And *the meek*, says *Isaiah*, *shall increase their joy in the Lord*. *Isa. xxix. 19.* Temporal blessings were the only (express) encouragements of *Jewish* obedience; and the whole earth in their Scripture-language did commonly import no more than the land of *Palestine*: which the *Jews* kept possession of (as appears through their whole history) by this title of their meek and submissive behaviour; and ever and anon forfeited by their murmuring pride and rebellion; God taking from them his usual blessings of prosperity, plenty and health in their own land; or sending them into captivity in another. So our Lord urges upon them an old Text out of the Prophets: If they will be meek, of a temper and behaviour comprehensive of all civil and religious obedience, they shall *inherit the earth*; that is, continue in the possession of their own land: if not, they must expect what must follow; as it soon did with a vengeance, a more amazing and dismal destruction and desolation than ever befel any nation upon earth. But we must not let this promise go wholly to the *Jews*: Our Lord (tho' his kingdom was not of this world as the *Jewish* œconomy was) no doubt intended that the meekness of his own followers should in due time be encouraged with sufficient gain from this world.

They that *seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness* are assur'd of an *addition* of all the

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cessary blessings of this world, and the meek are never unreasonable in their desires, and *godliness hath the promises of this life, as well as that which is to come*: So that we Christians may reckon upon as express temporal blessings as the *Jews* ever had. Another temporal advance, to make good the literal sense, is contributed by meekness, towards the inheritance of the earth; because it procures and preserves friendship in spite of all malice, keeps us from offences, which occasion the greatest disturbances of human life. *Τὸν γὰρ, dicere videtur firmas atque constantes amicitias, quæ in terris longe optima est possessio*, says the fore-mention'd * Commentator; possesses the earth, *i. e.* gets or possesses the hearts of men, establishes a firm friendship, forces love, at least veneration, from those that cannot practise it, or be masters of the same temper. So that the *meek* may be said without a strain to have *a goodly inheritance*, the fairest possession of the earth; they cannot fail of having the possessions of mens esteem and good opinion. I believe it is impossible for any rational man to be rais'd into hatred or indignation against a meek person: In how true a sense may he say, that all the world is mine, who hath no enemies, no invaders, is satisfy'd that he giveth occasion or provocation to none, and with all hath so full contentment within his own breast, that he hath no disquieting desires, that launch forth after other mens rights and possessions. In a word his peace and tranquillity of soul are inviolable; whereas the wicked (it is

* *Grotius.*

notori-

notorious) the covetous and ambitious, the strug-
glers for the earth, the haughty and arrogant, the
common disturbers of the world, had never any
quiet or peaceable possession of the earth amongst
them, tho' they *compass sea and land* for the at-
tainment. And thus far of the promised *bles-*
sing in the Text, as taken in the literal sense.

2dly. Other senses remove the reward to a
greater distance, and so belong to the practice of
virtue and piety in general: and the other qua-
lifications amongst these beatitudes will of right
come in for their share. As,

(1.) That the *inheritance of the earth*, com-
prehending all the *kingdoms of the world, and*
the glories thereof, is the nearest representation
to our gross apprehensions of all that is great
and glorious in the next world: As paradise up-
on earth gave both the name and idea to para-
dise in heaven: And *Jerusalem* below, the
holy and glorious city, to that *Jerusalem* above,
or the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the habitation of in-
numerable angels; and so likewise the earthly
to the heavenly *Canaan*. But the seeming pa-
radox will sound more harsh in this, than in the
plain literal sense: *The meek shall inherit the*
earth, that is to say, the kingdom of heaven;
which is already too given away to the *poor in*
spirit in the first beatitude.

(2.) Another interpretation of the promise is,
that the earth, after refinement at the end of the
world, shall become the glorious habitation of all
the blessed: St. *John* in the *Apocalypse* * saw

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* Rev. iii. 12. also xxi. 1, 2, 10.

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the image of it when he speaks of a *new Jerusalem coming down from God, and of a new heaven, and a new earth* : And then the *meek*, and not before, shall come to *their inheritance* : and from hence an opinion was commonly maintain'd, that after the general conflagration, the earth should be new fitted up again for the habitation of the faithful, and those who had deserved well upon it, when God shall *arise to judgment*, and *save all the meek* upon earth.

And let it be so, there needs no confutation. It is encouragement sufficient to put on *meekness*, to be *cloathed with humility*, all the days we live upon earth, tho' we meet with never so many inconveniencies and hardships in the practice ; if we can carry with us a title to an everlasting habitation of *blessedness*, whether in heaven, or upon a much better earth.

To conclude then ; Let us frame ourselves to this holy disposition and behaviour that is so advantageous both for this world and the next, by considering what I have already hinted.

(1.) It is the gospel temper, and without it, we are by no means the followers of Christ. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.* And it was his whole business both of his life and death, to act that part upon the earth for our ensample and learning. And the Disciples and Apostles and first race of Christians walked in the same meek and humble conversation, by which they brought so much honour and veneration to their religion, that it soon prevail'd against the malice of the earth and hell ; and the better,
tho'

tho' not the larger part of the habitable world, was soon its possession and inheritance: *The meek shall inherit the earth.*

(2.) We have not only example and precept for it, which must be followed, or else we lose the name of Christians: but meekness also in its own nature is most conducive to the attainment of all that our hearts can wish or desire. As,

1st. By procuring the singular favour and protection of God, who will ever have a particular regard to the meek, for their confiding trust and resignation to his wisdom and goodness; because they frame themselves the nearest to his image; are the liveliest emblems upon earth of his own most delectable attributes, his mercy and compassion, his patience and long-suffering: and are likewise the truest imitators of his son in all his deportment upon earth: And so they may be said to have a certain divine right to all the blessings upon earth, that are worthy of their acceptance, befitting their present station of lowliness and humility, and conducive to their happiness in the next world.

2^{dly}. By allaying the malevolent spirits of their ungodly adversaries, and dashing their malice to the ground by their resolute and persevering meekness, and thus they come in by a certain conquest, tho' it be made by non-resistance. For meekness prevails without blows, oft-times upon the most froward and cruel; makes them, as 'twere, give way and fall back, as struck with sudden fear and amazement, when they intended the severest assault or persecution: As the assailants
against

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against our Lord, *John* xviii. 6. as soon as he said, *I am he*; at the astonishing view of his dread meekness, his majestick innocence; they *went backward and fell to the ground*. Meekness conquers too by delay, by patient abiding, whilst the malice of its enemies is spending its violence to no purpose, and runs itself out of breath: and so oft-times happily tired into a better temper, and turns into what we call *patience by force*. Nay, sometimes meekness hath prov'd so amiable and taking, that it hath stopped the hands of bloody executioners, and brought them over to be of the party: and always is so exemplary and of such influence, that the moderation and meek behaviour of one in a society or neighbourhood shall allay many quarrels and dissensions, and make up many breaches: and yet, after all, it is by no means of so base and abject a temper as to suffer itself to be trampled upon, or an honest cause to be trampled down: it hath ever the truest courage (for it is deriv'd from innocence) when ever truth, especially loyal and religious truth call, for a vindication.

To sum up all: Modesty and humanity, affability and good-nature, courtesy and good-manners, gentleness and generosity, and whatsoever is praise-worthy, (all that the worst of men cannot but admire, tho' not imitate) are the inseparable accomplishments of meekness: and by constant observation and experience, (which can never fail) we find that by the exercise of these virtues and excellent qualities, our interest and
business

business in the world is ever better forwarded, made more successful, and brought to the satisfactory issue.

But who did ever, by the contrary temper and behaviour, come off with any tolerable satisfaction or advantage to himself, and without unavoidable and causeless injury and abuse to others? Was anger or impatience ever found a better expedient? We are oftentimes the more embroiled by it, but never brought off with true satisfaction in what we have said or done, nor with conquest, or indeed with any advantage over our enemies. Their malice may be restrain'd or smother'd for a while, by such violent proceedings, but be sure the first opportunity it will break out again with greater incensement, and a brooding rancour: whilst persevering meekness makes an entire victory, and a peace, with love, keeps ourselves quiet, and in time too by patient continuance will make our enemies so; to lay down their anger and be at peace with us.

Thus is meekness of its own nature, conducive to all peace and quietness of mind and conversation, and that we use to say, with a moderate estate and livelihood, is more to be valued than the possession of the whole earth. Therefore upon all considerations, for earthly ends and heavenly too, let us master ourselves in this point; laying aside all wrath and malice, let us try this better expedient of a resolute patience and a meek behaviour: in honour to our holy pacifick religion, that we may receive with meekness the *engrafted word, which is able to save*

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our souls; that we may walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; James i. 21. Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3. And then, if in this world of combustion, by the order of providence, and for the greater trial of our patience, we fail in all or any part of these happy effects upon earth; we are assur'd, as God and his holy religion are truth and faithfulness, that in heaven the meek and lowly in heart shall find everlasting rest unto their souls.

God of his infinite mercy bring us thro' all the evils and troubles of this mortal life unto the same everlasting rest, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, all Adoration, now and for ever. *Amen.*



SERMON XXVI.

Preached in *Christmas* Time.

Mercy to the Merciful.

MATT. V. 7.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

HERE is the highest and most comprehensive blessing offered to us, upon the most easy and equitable terms: mercy from the great God of heaven and earth, which implies all manner of blessings, and the fullest measure of them; the best for us in this world, if we will allow the all-wise donor to judge for us; and the surest and sublimest mercies, such as can never fail or be liable to exception, such as shall be infinite and everlasting in the world to come; if in our little matters here below, minute offices and dispensations of our favours and graces, we can but be merciful and charitable one toward another. And yet this is a hard chapter to some men, to quit the delights of resentment and revenge, and stoop to the mean compliances
of

of shewing mercy and compassion; of giving and forgiving, of doing good for evil, and turning supplicants to God too for his mercies to those that have despitefully used them.

But these are the indispensable terms and conditions of our Christian religion, and ample amends shall be made for our submission and good nature in this case; for *blessed* and ever-blessed *are the merciful*, &c. from which comfortable words let us enquire,

- I. What it is to be merciful, and the excellency of that temper and practice.
- II. The reasonableness and equitableness of obtaining this high reward, according to the measures and proportions of our own shewing mercy and goodness.
- III. The blessedness promised; for our temporary mercy in little boons and benefactions, we shall obtain infinite mercy from the hands of God; and fare the better for it too in this world.

I. We are to enquire, what it is to be merciful, and to shew the excellency of that temper and practice. The *Stoicks* exploded this attribute or property in their god, as thinking mercy and pity imported weakness and infirmity, and therefore was derogatory to almighty power and infinite wisdom: So would not allow prayers and supplications to be proper acts of divine worship, which

which supposed their deities to be easy and flexible, and which were to bend them to the meanness of gratifying, or complying with, the desires of mortal creatures.

And indeed this must be a necessary conclusion from their great fundamental doctrine of Fate and Necessity: That all things were 'fore-determined by an absolute and irreverfible decree. For if fo, what room can there be for mercy and compaffion, for remitting or relaxing penalties? Should God in his nature be fo well inclin'd, his decree had precluded him; it could not remain in his power to effect it upon any objects whatever, becaufe their sufferings and wants, that made them pityable, was fuch a fatal or dead weight upon them, as could not be abated or removed by any post-application or interceffions.

And whosoever among Christians maintain the fame doctrine, can never elude the fame conclusion: which caufes a great deal of ill-nature among them; they do in effect fhut up the mercies of God, and bar all providential acts of fuccour and relief upon the greateft neceffities, and upon the moft humble and earneft fupplications that can be made, becaufe all things are already determined. And perhaps this may be the reason and caufe of that hardnefs of nature, that is rightly obferv'd, and juftly enough charged upon the people of that perfuafion, in cenfuring, judging and condemning, and always pronouncing the worft, upon the ftate and condition of other men, efpecially fuch as are of an adverfe
opinion

opinion and party, and so think themselves excused from pity and compassion, and they ought in justice to fall in with the decree, by which those others, as they have prejudged, are reprobated, and thereby to be look'd upon as the enemies of God.

So much I thought proper to premise relating to the mercy of God, who is the fountain from whence all mercies do flow: But the mercifulness of men is the subject now before us, which consisteth in a tenderness of nature, with uneasiness and compunction for the evils and miseries, whether of sin or punishment, that have befallen others; and this (if not pretended, or only selfish) will shew itself in the most earnest desires, and utmost endeavours to succour and relieve the distressed sufferers.

Now other moralists among the philosophers will hardly allow this affection, either in disposition or practice, to have any place among their moral virtues: but explode it too in men as the *Stoicks* do in their God's, as arising from principles of selfishness, and denoting timidity and poorness of spirit. We shrink at the sight and knowledge of the miseries and calamities of others, because the first thought that naturally starts in our minds upon the view, is a frightful fancy or supposition, What if ourselves should fall into the like wretched and calamitous circumstances? And if according to their doctrines, we ought to bear our own evils and miseries, with an invincible patience and unconcernedness; how great must our weakness and pusillanimity be

be that shall cast us into a pitiful compassion and uneasiness, upon the sorrows and sufferings of other people? These are their high flights and mere cant against the most noble and generous virtue that dignifies our beings, raises us nearest to his image that gave them, and makes us sociable creatures one with another, else not to be tolerated among the rest of the creation. So that the distinction betwixt good and evil, right and wrong, justice and violence, is not greater, more sensible and visible, than between good and ill-nature, an hard and a tender heart; between mercy and compassion, and tyranny and oppression. Doth not the distinction stare us in the face, and is irresistible upon our apprehensions, when it becomes matter of fact? When we see a man sedate and peaceable under the greatest provocations and affronts, merciful and forbearing, and forgiving, when he hath received the most incensing injuries, and hath his enemy at his foot and under his power. And in another view, what a wretched monster do we behold, when we see a man without humanity, upon every occasion unmerciful and outrageous, calling out for vengeance and executions, faulting in his speech, and more in his reason, by the violence of his passion, and the virulence of his unexpressible malice.

How famous and renowned in story have many great men been for their heroick mercy, when they have generously given quarter to their enemies, and sav'd their lives, when they well knew they should have found no mercy at their

hands? It is the most illustrious and shining virtue, and the boldest courage and valour do not out-do it in true bravery. It is cowardice that murders and massacres, that secures its enemies by stabs and quick dispatches, by such sure and mortal strokes, as shall lay him fast for ever, lest his courage and just revenge should be awaken'd and rous'd up, and be ever able to return the blow.

But what a monster of unmercifulness hath blackened the solemnity of this * Festival? Behold a bloody-cowardly tyrant sacrificing thousands of innocents, harmless and hurtless, in whose mouths was found no guile; for they were without fault before the throne of God, (as you have now heard them represented in the *Epistle* for the Day) as tho' they had been actual rebels against his government, and invaders of his dominions; and all to keep quiet his own guilty frightened conscience (a monstrous expedient) that haunted him with restless and torturing suspicions and apprehensions of a right heir to king *David's* crown; that according to presages should grow up into a competitor, and throw him out of his usurped kingdom. A barbarity not to be paralleled in its kind; and yet there are too many instances upon record of establishing unrighteousness by unmercifulness, of prosecuting the most wrongful enterprizes by the most extensive cruelties, and securing all by the same politick baseness and inhumanity. And it hath been long known and experienced, that it is a false religion, an unrighteous

* *Innocent's* Day, 1708.

righteous cause, the most unjustifiable opinions, and the most defenceless and pernicious errors, that are all for racks and tortures, for gibbets and burnings, for destroying root and branch, and all that stands in their way: But *mercy* and *truth* ever *meet together*, in the closest amity *kissing* each other, and are inviolable friends: *Truth* and *righteousness* never want such guards and defences, such violent vindications, or bloody prosecutions. And morality and true religion make all their victories, and raise all their triumphs by mercy and charity.

Our religion is altogether founded upon mercy; to be unmerciful ourselves, is an open defiance and an express renunciation of all the mercies of God. We have a merciful *high Priest*, that hath been touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and is passed into the heavens, to establish a fund of mercy there for us: He can be none of our high Priest for these uses, unless we have laid up our treasures also in heaven, which by no ways and means can possibly be done without some expence and bountiful effusion of mercy and charity upon earth.

We are for ever lost without mercy: Creation, providence, and above all our redemption, have been continued trains of divine mercy from the foundation of the world: And should God *be extreme to mark what we have done amiss*, judgments must come so thick upon us, that there could be no room for mercy to intervene and relieve us; his wrath with justice must sink us into everlasting perdition.

And yet are we on many occasions for putting in execution such a *summum jus*; extreme and exact in marking every thing that is done amiss towards ourselves: Enhancing and aggravating every petty affront and injury, and if we must *forgive* them, or say we do, yet still retaining in our hearts that sweet savour of revenge, that we are resolved never to *forget* them. Whereas the Holy Ghost in Scripture chuses rather to charge our heavenly Father with forgetfulness, with slowness to anger, with tardy and dilatory proceedings in rigorous justice (happy imperfections for us, if they could be called such) than with the hasty and furious dispensations of his wrath, the quick and implacable dispatches of his vengeance: They indeed at last shall have *judgment without mercy, that have shewed no mercy*; but with God *mercy* in this world *ever rejoiceth against judgment*, *James ii. 13.*

It may as truly be observed again, that some ill-natur'd people (they more especially of that ill-natur'd persuasion but now mention'd) are very subject upon many occasions, to a sort of murmuring and complaining, that God Almighty himself doth not hurl about his thunder-bolts fast enough; that he is too gracious and forbearing towards those that they have marked out to be the notorious sinners of this age; not considering what manner of spirit they ought to be of under the gospel, and as little considering what latent sins they have of their own to answer for, not perhaps so notorious, but quite
out

out as heinous, and as worthy of punishment, as without repentance they will be sure to find at last.

This is very ill-natur'd and unmerciful, to be troubled, that God's wrath doth not join with our own resentments and indignation: And if it falls out sometimes so to do, what inward satisfactions are there in the minds of some men, too visibly seen in their outward aspect and behaviour, that the judgments of God do so exactly concur with their own wishes, and so luckily fall in with the measures of their own pretended justice. But God forbid it should be often so; for the justice, and sometimes even mercies of men, are subject to a sort of insulting cruelty: The punishments of heaven are ever seasonable according to the unerring measures of divine wisdom, justice and goodness; and for the merciful purposes of amendment of offenders, and example to the standers-by: But we should be all in a woeful condition, if they should be inflicted ever and anon, to gratify the desires and wishes of many that are about us, or laid on as hastily as some hard-hearted pretenders to righteousness, would prescribe and rejoice at.

We are safest under the dispensations of God's both mercies and judgments. Holy David's choice will be ever our best security, to fall into the *hands of the Lord* (for very great are his mercies) and *not into the hands of men*, (1 Chro. xxi. 13.) It is impossible God should be wrong in any thing; and it is hard

we should think he can err in mercy and forbearance, in suspending the execution of his vengeance, and making the utmost tryal with his goodness and loving kindness.

Severity and vindictive justice is indeed the necessary administration of magistracy, and must in many instances supersede mercy *, yet when ever a mitigation or favourable construction of the law can be admitted, good men in authority will rather incline that way, than to the rigorous dispensations of justice, unless in cases where mercy itself may become unmerciful in its consequences, and sparing the criminal may by unwary clemency and compassion, put him into a capacity of repeating his villanies, and doing more extensive mischief: As also by his not being made an example, the number of transgressors may increase, and many injuries and unmerciful acts be committed upon that default of punishment.

For punishment according to its true and natural design and tendency is rather an act of mercy than revenge, the end of it being to do good and not so much to retaliate evil. But as to persons in private capacities, they must ever keep up close to the gospel rule; always to be *merciful*, as they hope to *find mercy* from the hands of God. Determining cases of right and wrong; pronouncing sentence, and inflicting punishment, belong not to their province; in their inclinations and endeavours, they are always to be on the merciful and pardoning side; nothing

* *Exod. xxiii. 3. Levit. xix. 15.*

nothing but self preservation, and the vindication and defence of our natural and necessary rights, can suspend the exercise of our mercy in our conversation and dealings one with another. But the inclinations, the desires, the ready dispositions towards all acts and offices of mercy, and towards all objects, are the true Christian temper, and always of indispensable obligation.

For tho' we should allow the *mercifulness* of men to be no more than a *passion*, as the moralists will have it: Yet we see our Saviour hath dignified it above all the rest, by entitling it to the highest blessedness that is attainable, the assurance of mercy from himself. And the distinction and preference is founded upon reason and experience. Other passions are generally irregular and disorderly, oftener in the wrong than in the right, and very frequently throw us upon many evils and inconveniencies: But this is so sweet-natur'd an affection, that it never errs, but by some rare or accidental circumstance, and ever (as we say) upon the right hand; and is productive of many virtuous and of all the charitable and beneficial acts that are done in the world.

Now the exercise of mercy both divine and human, in an higher and precedent degree to justice, can be no diminution of authority, unless when shewn to such as are known to be of the most incorrigible and profligate temper and practice, who in truth ought not to be reckon'd amongst human kind. For tho' the rigours of justice do more naturally excite our fears,

and strike the greater dread; yet mercy will in due measure keep up that, and raise us too to the more obliging passion of love; which in conjunction do ever produce the most faithful and fastest obedience.

Holy *David* doth often acknowledge, that the *Lord is merciful, and to be feared*: And *Pf. lxii. 12. Even to thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy*; and the instance given may cast us into trembling; *For thou renderest to every man according to his work*. Mercy is an incitement to fear, and fear is an absolute condition required by mercy, *Psal. ciii. 11. As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him*: and ver. 13. *Like as a father pityeth his children, so the Lord pityeth them that fear him*. Whilst he is most merciful, we ought most to fear, lest that mercy abused or slighted (as it naturally must do) change to the extremest wrath and provocation. The mercifulness of men too must have the like influences upon our fear: And common ingenuity and good nature must necessarily keep up an awe and dread of the displeasure of such superiours and benefactors, whose mercies and favours have been signal towards us, and have been valuable, and have much contributed to our well-being.

When *St. Paul* speaks so vehemently against revenge, *Rom. xii. 1. as infringing and breaking in upon the prerogative of God, and enjoins repeated persevering acts of mercy and bounty*; he adds that in so doing, *thou shalt heap*

heap coals of fire on the head of thy adversary.

The interpretation of which figurative expression must necessarily be, the melting of him down into softness and complacency, into submission and fear, lest his hardness and obstinacy should extort the utmost vengeance: if it were literally to be understood, it may seem to countenance or indeed command (as St. *Austin* * observes) far from charity and mercy, that foul crime of wishing and endeavouring the extremity of mischief and revenge to our adversary. Upon this the Apostle concludes the whole with this excellent expression of advice, *be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good: Vincit malos pertinax bonitas*, says a moralist that was his contemporary, "Pertinacious obstinate perseverance
" in shewing mercy, and doing good, will, if
" any thing, prevail upon the most wicked and
" hard-hearted wretches: " But to be overcome ourselves by evil, to be routed by our own passions of malice and unmercifulness, will make us the worst wretches, and is giving up *gratis* the conquest to our enemies.

Thus mercy will keep up fear as well as love, in those towards whom it is exercised (inhuman and incorrigible tempers always excepted) and therefore can be no diminution to authority, nor any lessening to the truest and most faithful obedience.

Now to discover and put in practice the methods and measures of shewing mercy, we must take our pattern from heaven: Mercy is that moral

* St. *Augustine* de Doct. Christian. Lib. III. Cap. 6.

moral attribute of God that is most imitable; purity is another; but we may easily conceive ourselves, that we can never come up to so near a resemblance of his purity as we may of his mercy: here some fair strokes of his image may be drawn, that may be said to be a likeness; and indeed no imitation is more pleasing to him: Therefore at the end of this chapter of my Text, after several injunctions of mercy and goodness in giving and forgiving, in bearing all manner of injuries and revenging none, (Ver. 43.) he re-assumes and takes up the subject again: *Ye have heard that it hath been said of old, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you; that you may be the children (i. e. the nearest allyed in resemblance) of your heavenly Father; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust:* And then, verse the last, includes all in that one precept; *Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*; plainly denoting that these are the highest acts of perfection we are capable of shewing, and the nearest and most possible imitation of our heavenly Father, that we can attain to; therefore, in the parallel place of the evangelist St. *Luke* (chap. vi. ver. 36.) where the same injunctions of mercy and goodness one towards another are given forth, Mercy is set down as fully expressing that perfection, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

Let

Let us then oblige heaven by being merciful upon earth. Our own experience (which is the surest knowledge we have) of the proceedings of divine providence, and those abundant notices we have from the holy Scriptures, will sufficiently guide us, and ought to incite us to the imitation of this most delightful beloved attribute of God, his mercy; by him above all beloved, for our sakes, because *he loveth us*.

1. Then we may observe, that tho' providence is, first or last, very distinguishing (far from blind chance) in bringing judgments upon the wicked, after a long run, and in visible deliverances of the righteous, tho' with some delays; yet we may be allow'd to say, He is by no means oblig'd to that niceness and punctuality that we foolishly pretend to. We are quick and hasty in determining ourselves to to the extremities of favour, or the extremities of hatred; when he that looks closer and nearer, finds there is no occasion for either, but in relation to both, remits or delays with unerring justice and mercy. Two very good but hot disciples were pressing upon our good Lord, who came to save and not to destroy, that they *might command fire from heaven* upon a village in *Samaria*; but he sharply rebuked them, and said, *Ye know not of what manner of spirit ye are of*. That unworthiness which was shewed in not receiving him might be out of ignorance; or perhaps the guilt but of some few of the inhabitants, and must the whole town be laid in ashes?

All methods of mercy for reclaiming must first be

be used before we come to extremity, to punishment and execution; and by these means and delays we come to consideration, by which our resentments often-times cool and abate, and sometimes change: we perhaps may find our supposed adversary, not so guilty or not so designing; or that we ourselves have all this while but only suspected. For indeed how often doth it happen in this case, That a man shall be railed at, and prosecuted with all malevolence, all malicious invectives, have all ill offices done him, and at last it shall prove, that all hath been unjust, and a false grounded suspicion; nothing of truth in the whole accusation or suggestion? What reparation can be made for this hasty vent of our anger, and resentments? How shall we undo it, and wipe off all the scandals and reproaches we have at random scatter'd far and near? Vindications of innocence seldom overtake aspersions upon a man's good name: for the world is generally not so solicitous to divulge the defence and justification of such as are falsely accused, and vilified thereupon, as before it was to disperse the accusation.

Oh! time and consideration are of mighty use for the allaying and regulating our passions. God wants no such helps, no notices to be given, no informations or discoveries to be made, no allegations or witnesses to be produced; the malevolence of the actor, and the malignity of the fact, are fully known to him in the very instant of commission; why should he make any demur in the execution of justice, but that his mercy and
forbearance

forbearance should be a standing example to us? Thus God is sure both in his mercies and judgments, yet the latter seem to come hardest or most difficult from him, put him, as 'twere out of his way, the most delectable course of his providence: By his prolongations and delays, and suspensions, it seems to be an uneasy work. He challenges it indeed as his prerogative, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay*: he knows how, and when, and upon whom to execute it; we are wholly unskilful of the matter in all relations: Blindness and prejudice makes us always wrong, and involve ourselves in greater evils and perplexities; and therefore it is in mercy to us, that he so strictly forbids us to meddle in it.

2. We may observe again, that God's severity is often, almost always, preceded by a long train of mercies: many showers of bounty and goodness descend before the vials of his wrath are poured forth. There are very few persons that were ever under any severe affliction, any streights and difficulties, and had a true sense of their condition, but might look back upon many successions of mercies and deliverances, many fair opportunities of preventing the miseries they are under, and keeping themselves in the favour of God: But all was disregarded and abused, and so they may thank themselves for the extremities that are brought upon them, it is their own act and deed; they would not let the justice of God be at quiet, by their repeated provocations, till vengeance was executed, and that justice vindicated.

We

We have no right to vengeance, the necessary concluding part of God's proceedings; here we are by no means to be imitators; but the preceding methods of trying by all gentle means, of intreating, persuading, admonishing, suspending and delaying, are indispenfibly obliging upon us, of heaping favours in answer to unkindnesses, of *forgiving even to seventy times seven*, that is, without number, if possibly we can bring over our adversaries.

3. To conclude, The mercies of God are infinitely before-hand of ours. He hath laid in such a fund as is inexhaustible, and the returns we are requir'd to make to our fellow-creatures, do not come up to the smallest pittance, even of one mite, to answer his boundless and everlasting mercies; and yet shall they be received as value, in full payment, through the infinite merits and satisfaction of his son Christ Jesus.

And now this solemn time calls upon us to contemplate upon this mercy above all mercies; the incarnation of our blessed Lord; the greatest the most opportune, the most wanted mercy that almighty power, infinite wisdom and goodness could bring about for us. He took upon himself our flesh; our whole natures, with all our infirmities (sin only excepted) for mercy's sake. As tho' coming into the world to see what we wanted, and to discover our ails and complaints, that he might bear the burden of our grievances, as well as the punishment for our sins; and also destroy the powers of temptation from abroad, as well as of our own natural propensities at home:
that

that he might too be a leading example of resistance against all these evils of our human nature, as afterwards become the more suitable mediator, in cases he had experienced himself: All which tho' he could not but fully know before as God, yet a sensible discovery was proper and necessary, and hath been very usual in divine proceedings; even for God himself to treat mankind after that sensible manner that comports with their way and method of examining and judging of matters. So, *Gen. xxviii. 20, 21.* in relation to mercy as well as justice, saith the Lord; *Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which is come unto me, and if not I will know.* How fair and sedate were these proceedings, level'd to the methods of human justice? That men might see, notwithstanding his omniscience, he would make a personal descent, in order to the strictest and fairest enquiry, to know if there might not be room for mercy and forgiveness: 'before execution, I will go down myself, and examine into the matter.'

But how enravishing is the merciful condescension here? *The cries of all the children of men are come up unto me*, they will be for ever lost without a Saviour, and they are utterly unable to save or help themselves: I will go down and see into their distress, and make a personal abode amongst them; I will put myself into their case and circumstances, will acquaint myself with all their grievances, by assuming their whole nature; so
that

that as many as will submit to the restorative methods of living, the conditions of mercy and salvation, shall more than recover their lost estate; *they shall reign with me in everlasting bliss and glory.*

And in order to this glorious design, mercy was diffused in the most exemplary manner to incite our imitation through all his conversation and abode upon earth: It was the subject or result of all his discourses, the moral of all his parables, the resolution and decision of all cases and questions that were put to him; every miracle was such a transcendent mercy, as was beyond all the powers of the world to bestow; mercy was his whole labour and travail: *He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil,* afflicted with any manner of evils or diseases, *for God was with him,* saith St. Peter, Acts x. 38. Humanity and good-nature alone, tho' the highest perfection of goodness in mortal men, had been insufficient for these mighty demonstrations of mercy, but that he was as truly God as he was the best of men. I should now go on to the other points I first laid down, and purposed to discourse upon: But I find they will take up more time than now remains; and therefore (in respect to your patience) shall defer them to another opportunity.

Now to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, all Might, Majesty and Adoration, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

S E R-

SERMON XXVII.

MATT. V. 7.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

IN justice to mercy, the last subject I was upon in this place, I stand obliged to make good what I had farther promised and proposed upon this inestimable blessedness; the finite mercifulness of men rewardable with the infinite mercies of God.

To introduce what I had more to say, and keep to the method I laid down, I may be allow'd to make a short recital of what hath already been delivered. Here is a duty and qualification propos'd to you, to which you are encouraged with the most comforting and comprehensive blessing; we may say vastly unproportionable, exceedingly transcendent to all pretence or possibility of merit, by any acts of mercy that can be done upon earth.

For the minute inconsiderable offices of goodness and mercy, love and friendship one towards another; the infinite stores and invaluable treasures of divine mercy and loving-kindness shall be opened unto us for our everlasting inheritance and enjoyment.

We have already enquired, upon the *first* head
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of my Discourse, what it is to be merciful, and the excellency of that temper and practice: In which enquiry I found occasion to explode the notions of those philosophers who would not allow *mercy* and compassion to be an attribute or property of perfection in their Gods, but that it betokened weakness and infirmity, and so consequently in men, would by no means grant it to be a laudable disposition or virtuous practice. But if tyranny and cruelty be shining virtues in princes, then mercy and compassion would be unworthy and diminishing attributes in their Gods, whose representatives they have ever been accounted upon earth.

The opinion of *Atheists* and *Epicureans* would be more happy and eligible than this; and mortals would be in a better condition without a God, or the providential government of any such being over the world; should he never fail at any time of being exact and extreme in marking every thing poor mortals do amiss; should his highest perfections consist in the rigour of distributive justice, and irremissible executions; and the sentence always irreversible, that the *soul that sinneth shall surely die*. The better natur'd *Heathens* had their inferiour Gods, and Dæmons, for the rigid offices of evil and punishment; and put upon them all the hardships and irregularities of the world, both as to creation and providence; reserving and ascribing all goodness and mercy, and protection to the higher powers, and better qualified deities. And with us the Devil is the common executioner; he was the tormenting agent and instrument in inflicting all those sore and vexatious punishments upon *Job*: And the extreme of punish-

punishments, even under the transcendent mercies of the Gospel, is giving the incorrigible sinner over to Satan to be buffeted by him: so that mercy and goodness are the genuine perfections, the prevailing and over-ruling attributes of the true God, whose tender bowels cannot grieve the children of men, without a sort of grief to themselves.

We have heard of *Indians*, that are more immediately and almost solely under such a tyrannical power, or conceit themselves to be so: But how wretched is their ignorance and slavery, when a base fear is their only motive to worship, and they must hate the imps and devils at the same time they fall to adoration.

It is to the mercy of God that we owe all the blessings of this life, and all we hope for in the next must come from thence. Their notion too is as absurd and very ill-natur'd, that pity and compassion is little less than a vice in men, at least a great infirmity, it may accidentally or circumstantially prove something like it, in some particular instances which I have already given, in relation to some necessary cases of justice. But virtue and vice, right and wrong, justice and violence, are not more clearly distinguished, as I have shewn at large, than are mercy and cruelty, good and ill-nature, tender and hard-heartedness: The former we call to the honour of our nature, *humanity*, and peculiarly in our own language *good-nature*; and must he not be the vilest of mortals that will set inhumanity before it? Or put both upon a level? You may easily make the distinction by demonstration: It is but setting to view the unmerciful man foaming

P 2

with

with malice and revenge; and the man of mercy, meek and sedate in his mien and whole behaviour and practice; as I have more at large set forth the just characters of both. Who can consider and judge better than he that can command his passions? can rule and govern himself, can lay aside prejudices and clear the way for his understanding and reason, and religion too, to come into the arbitration, making excuses and abatements, extenuating and alleviating objections, where equity will admit of grains of allowance, and putting every case as his own, and not denouncing till he has considered and repeated over to himself that moral and divine maxim of *doing to others as he would be done by*? In the second place,

II. I am to lay before you the equity and reasonableness of obtaining mercy from the hands of God, which implies all blessings spiritual and temporal, according to the measures of our own mercy and goodness one towards another. If we have any knowledge or conception of a merciful and gracious God, of which we have visible and signal instances every day, the same conception is unavoidable, That mercy and favour must qualify us for his favour and mercy: That all the cruel savages and devouring beasts of the earth must be as welcome into humane societies, as inhuman ill-natur'd mortals can be into heavenly habitations. How unreasonable, unconscionable, as we may say, is it to expect, that God should be gracious and long-suffering to us, slow to anger and abundant in mercy upon all occasions (even provocations! we murmur if he be not so) but we think we may be allowed to discharge ourselves

at any time of our displeasure and resentments, of our hard sayings and censures; and put 'em, if in our power, in execution; calling all but justice and equity towards those that have been so base (as we call it) towards us, they have deserv'd no better at our hands. But pray, thou man of justice, consider, if thy wrath and fury will give thee time and leave, to put a question, Wouldst thou be willing God should be as punctual in his justice of retribution, and follow thee upon every offence and provocation with proportionable punishment and due vengeance? Thou canst not have the face to say but that it is highly equitable, and necessary justice that he should: Thou hast been much more severe with thy neighbour. If these be thy proceedings, and way of going, thou must never expect mercy at the hand of God: *Blessed can the merciful only be, for they shall only obtain mercy*; and that according to the measures and proportions of shewing mercy. Our Lord in this matter hath more industriously endeavour'd to set forth and illustrate these equitable proceedings, than in any other instance of injunction whatsoever. The parable you meet with, *Mat. xviii.* beginning at *ver 23.* is most expressive in every particular: *The kingdom of heaven is there likened to a certain King which would take account of his servants*: and in short (to leave the particulars of his ordering to your own reading) *he forgave* a considerable debt to one of the chiefest of them, upon his *falling down* before him to beg his forbearance; it is said, *ver. 27.* that *he was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.* And be sure he could ex-

pest no less in equity and conscience, but that he would be as kind to any fellow-servant, in the like proportion, if the like occasion should happen; but hearing another story of him, he renews his claim and *delivers him over to the tormentors*, with that just rebuke and reprehension, *Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?* And our Lord makes the application, verult. *So likewise shall your heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*

Let any man of the highest pretences to justice, who would exalt it above mercy, judge whether these are not the most equitable proceedings. The 16th Chapter of St. *Luke* begins and ends with two parables, both relating to this subject: The *unjust steward*, that had been so to his lord, be-thinks himself of mercy towards his *lord's* debt-ers, and remits to them a great part of his just demands, to ingratiate himself, that he may be pitied and taken into some maintenance and sustenance, when his Lord and master should turn him out of doors. The Lord commends the unjust steward, notwithstanding his unjust dealings towards him, because by these proceedings of mercy he had his reward; had made provision for himself in his approaching necessities and exigencies: and our Lord too argues or rather lays down as the moral of the parable, that *the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light*: Then applies the whole scope of the parable, *Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they*

they may receive you into everlasting habitations; that is, such your good works of charity, forgiveness and benevolence, or the prayers of such as are partakers of them, will bring you to heaven.

As great a design as any of God's mercy and bounty here below, in such affluence upon us mortals, is, to put us into a capacity to shew mercy and loving-kindness upon earth: All those injunctions in the Gospel, of laying up treasures, establishing an interest and fund in heaven, relate purely and entirely to acts of bounty and charity towards our fellow-brethren that are in want and necessity.

Again, in the latter part of the fore-mentioned chapter; we have in a most melancholick and doleful parable represented to us the severe but very equitable retribution of unmercifulness. A rich and great man by death translated from his palace upon earth, from a state of plenty and enjoyment, to a place of the most exquisite torments, to the want of one *drop of water* to give him the least refreshment, that had never wanted in the world before the finest delicacies to gratify his appetites; whilst amidst all his abundance and luxury, *Lazarus*, and the poor lay starving at his gate, could not be allow'd, tho' never so much beg'd for, to feed on the crums that fell from his table. Unconscionable wretch! to be cram'd with all the good things of this life, and to let none drop by, among his indigent starving brethren, that had as good a title as himself, only the greater portion was left in his hands as a depositum or trust, to be dispensed among those that were left naked and needy, as the inviting objects of his mercy and liberality.

Injunctions for mercy run thro' the whole Gospel, upon the peril of failing of it utterly from the hands of God. That great mercy of mercies, tho' of infinite value, and sufficiency by the merits and blood of Christ Jesus, must fail of all benefit, and prove even deficient to all those that cannot lay in a certain claim and title by their own mercy and benefactions in giving and forgiving. When our Lord taught his Disciples to pray in that most excellent and comprehensive form called by his own name, he comments upon that petition of mercy, as tho' it were the purport or main importance of the whole devotion, as soon as he had concluded it, Mat. vi. 14, 15, *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses:* insisting on no other petition, but emphatically upon this, as being the grossest absurdity, even contradictory to the whole nature of the Gospel-covenant of grace, (which consisteth in the pardon and remission of sin, of all injuries and trespasses against God, and the promises of everlasting life) that unmerciful wretches should come in for any share in the mercies and merits of Christ Jesus. And this should bring me to the blessedness promised in the text, which is the third general head I purposed to speak upon: and be assured, that the same God of mercy will reward all the lovers of mercy with all suitable blessings in this life; and they shall not fail of his infinite and everlasting mercies in the life to come.

III. Our mercifulness so qualified and shewn forth

forth in such due measure and proportion, as bear some relation and resemblance to the mercies of God receiv'd by us, as far as finite can imitate and resemble infinity; we shall have an everlasting reward with earnest in hand in this life, of prosperity, or inward satisfaction; but assuredly the infinitely preferable blessedness of eternal happiness and glory. For little offices and obligations, the droppings of our bounty; *casting our bread upon the waters*, according to the *Jewish proverb* Ecc. xi. 1. which must denote the littleness, but with all the freeness, and we shall find it after many days, the charity shall not be forgot; we shall receive princely favours, royal honours, be great in the kingdom of heaven. For our scantlings of good turns done amongst our fellow brethren, *full measures of mercies pressed down and running over*. God takes the return upon himself, *in as much as ye have done it to the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*, Mat. xxv. 40. To him we can do no material kindness, no substantial advance of his honour, thro' the whole course of our lives, *could we give all our goods to feed the poor*: but we are put in a state here to shew it one to another, and according to this management, and upon this tryal, we shall find mercy and forgiveness from the hands of God.

So this must turn to wonderful account, if we believe the holy Scriptures, and can take God's word for it. Our mercy will become an act of religious policy, and the most provident improvement: Our Lord allows even of the self-design in this case, in his application of the parable of the unjust steward, recommending the policy of the

the children of the world, and according to their cunning advising his followers to *make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*: Why cannot ye, the children of the light, be as cunning, designing, and projecting (the policy will be allowed) as the children of the world?

Let us then wisely lay in for mercy, by shewing mercy. Commentators have interpreted most of these beatitudes, as bearing some preceding relation to the blessings of this life, a temporal reward: Even the mourners, the persecuted and reviled, if wise and patient, and trusting in God under their sufferings, may meet and often do with a blessing in this world; often have their happy turns, by which a sensible compensation is made: But more especially the merciful, do experience the returns of their charity, in their protection and deliverance from many evils and distresses, providence shining upon them in many signal and peculiar favours before they come to die. And on the other side, How many remarkable instances have we in story, and our own observation, that unmerciful men who have done some signal acts of cruelty, have sometimes on the same day of the year, sometimes in the same place, upon the same occasion, with many notable resembling circumstances, that do almost demonstrate, that their unmercifulness and inhumanity are thus met with, been paid in their own kind? Not that this is to pass into an absolute and never-failing rule without any exception, that merciful men should always meet with a recompence here below, or unmerciful men shall meet with their due reward and retribution; it may often fail,

as

as long as men are but men, mercy is capable of being abused with continuance, and ill-requited as well as any other virtue: otherwise our Saviour would have been more kindly treated than he was by the *Jews*; and unmercifulness in all ages, should meet with more adequate and remarkable judgments, as good men may be apt to expect; but the wise providence of God may order it otherwise.

The meaning then is this, that nothing doth commend more naturally a man to the good-will and compassion of others, than a merciful and benign temper, and that, generally speaking, if men be but tolerably disposed, and have any sense of justice and gratitude, the merciful man will actually find in good thoughts, and wishes, and actions, mercy among them: But the unmerciful man, who is so rigid that will admit of no alleviations, excuses or abatements, if he meets with any mercy in this world, it is far beyond his deservings; and his punishment and retribution in the next life, must necessarily be more severe and rigid upon him: Not that we are to desire, or wish for evils or severe judgments upon the worst of men: But it is a confirmation of our religion, and of our fear of God, and a stronger belief of his providence, when we see with our eyes that persevering sin, unmercifulness especially, the most provoking and unpardonable one, doth not escape divine vengeance. But should it be superceded for some wise purposes of divine providence, then the conclusion will be stronger, that an everlasting reprieve cannot be expected, execution must be done at last, which will prove longest and severest.

In

In fine, allowing a suspense or omission of all rewards of mercifulness in this world ; and abating for all the just retributions of unmercifulness : (let it go so) is not there another world ? Don't you believe it ? Don't you fear it ? At least, don't you suspect it ? Is it possible, or can we think it probable that unmercifulness should go clear off, and escape vengeance for ever ? Or that mercy and charity should never be rewarded, because it hath met with nothing like it in this world ? Even this is a very convincing argument for a future estate ; when we see the generous mercies of good men not duly taken notice of, or rewarded here ; we cannot but conclude, if there be a God, there must be another life, when all the nearest and best beloved imitators of his goodness, shall be received into the arms of his everlasting mercy, and be made partakers of his infinite goodness to all eternity, in *fulness of joy and pleasures for ever more*.

And this doth not depend upon so many casualties, and such uncertain suppositions as the rewards of mercy here in this world : In the other it is only required, that *mercy and truth meet together* ; and the man be found sincere and upright in all moral respects : For it is not to be thought that *mercy* alone, tho' that will go as far as any virtue or grace whatever, can qualify a man for all the mercies of God, which comprehend all blessings of glory and bliss. But the man must be *τέλειος κ, ὁλόκληρος*, perfect and entire, and wanting nothing as to all the integral parts of duty, to be *accepted*, and stand *right in the judgment of God*, *Jam. i. 4*. Only, I say, there may be allowed

this

this farther sense in the proposition, that no one virtue or divine precept shall go so far towards the obtaining the full mercy of God, as this of mercifulness in man: And if the merciful man for want of other necessary parts of Christian perfection, should not be able to stand in the last judgment, yet however, his fall shall be much the milder, and be sure he shall have great abatements of punishment made him, for the sake of his own worthiness in practice of this most excellent praiseworthy virtue. To this purpose it is very considerable, that our Saviour in the description of the proceedings of the last judgment, makes all the favour, and all the severity of that day, to arise from the practice or omission of this duty, *Mat*, xxv. so that one way or other this is a proposition of infallible truth, a promise of never-failing veracity, The merciful shall be sure to be requited with mercy: God will not forget this *labour of love*, pray God we may not forget it ourselves, but may so love, study, and practice mercy here, that we may hereafter, not only receive a milder sentence, but find such a degree of mercy, as may finally rejoyce us against judgment.

It is mercy is our best Christian hold and title, the only one indeed to all the blessings of this life, and that which is to come, and no greater forfeiture can we make than by not being merciful ourselves.

I have intimated it already, and ought to be allowed to repeat it again upon this occasion*. We must take care that our mercifulness be substantially attested. There are hypocrites in mercy, as well as other pretended practices of virtue and holiness. There is a specious tenderness in some fear-

* The Protestant Brief then published, 1716.

ful and easily surprized persons, that is not drawn forth into real bounty and relief; but goes off with a pretended aking of their hearts, and attended with the shaking of their heads, at the sight or hearing of such objects of misery; a great sorrow for their afflicted estate, but after all shall pass by those pitiable sighs and cries, as the *Priest* and *Levite* in the gospel, not so much as to put a hand forth to bind up the *sores* of the distressed, or into their purse to take out two-pence toward their support, *Luke* x. 33. and following verses. Such sort of mercy is not like the benign mercifulness of heaven, nor will ever be rewardable; their portion will more likely be not with the good *samaritan*, but with hypocrites and unbelievers. I do not know any thing upon earth in all Christian duties and obligations, next under the merits of Christ Jesus, can stand us in such stead, can so effectually assure to us all the favours and blessings of heaven, both in this world and the next, as the liberal distributions of those good things God gives us plentifully for that purpose; when we have opportunity, and most pitiable objects call upon us, and invite us to it, as are now most eminently represented to you in this *Brief* I have read, from so many testimonials, unto a people so long and miserably distressed, and persecuted: *Protestants* of the most antient and refined original, the first and greatest, and with all most Christian opposers of *Popery*; and the nearest to us, in maintaining the constitutions, the discipline and doctrines of our own Church: So that of all *Protestants* (as charity is due from all, and to all) we of the *Church of England* are more especially obliged,

obliged, to be extensive in our bounty and liberality to these our afflicted, persecuted, now extremely indigent brethren: More, I say, upon this account, according to the *Apostle's rule*, (universal indeed) but with a pre-eminence in this case; that we would *do good unto all men*, but especially to those that are of the *household of faith* †.

Let us, in fine, always consider of the absolute necessity we stand in of the mercy of God, or else we everlastingly perish. Our corrupt natures and dispositions, our numerous and heinous transgressions and provocations, our many injuries and oppressions, unmerciful and hard-hearted dealings, will sink us into a bottomless pit of misery and destruction, that is, just retribution. What would we give, upon the apprehensions and approaches of that, to be delivered? even more than all, if we had it, that we are now so unmercifully tenacious of.

The mercies of Christ Jesus are the great fund of our faith and hope: but we must cast some mites of our own mercy into this great treasury, or else this, tho' infinite in itself, will prove as deficient to us. It is an easy condition, but will indispen- sibly be insisted upon, there can be no remission: an infinite deliverance and an infinite reward can be no easy purchase. Let us not then grudge our mercies; we shall meet with vast amends, be paid to the uttermost farthing of our charity, many mercies and blessings of God in this life, and in the *life to come an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, such as * eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which*
God

† Gal. vi. 10. * 1 Cor. ii. 9. Isaiah lxi. 4. Psa. xxxi. 19.

God hath prepared for them that love him; and we may be allow'd to add, that love one another. Let us take the advice of St. Peter, and it is a full preparation and entire disposition, I need add no more, for the holy sacrament, which we are going to receive, 1 Ep. iii. 8, 9. Be ye all of one mind in this case, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrarywise, blessing; knowing that ye are here unto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. It is true, we cannot come in perfection, free from all sin to this holy table, we have still failures and infirmities, indeed we may say, loaden with iniquities: our resolutions too are weak and little to be confided in, yet we are invited, and we ought to come; why should we not come to be healed, and to receive grace and divine assistance so faithfully promised us in this ordinance? But after all, unmercifulness puts us in an utter incapacity and unworthiness; through all the office, and from the constitution itself; we are called upon for entire mercy and charity to all men in giving and forgiving: Go back from the altar, never think of *offering any gift there*, or receiving any, if thou art in a state of enmity or uncharitableness, or all is nought, and will prove the greater aggravation of guilt and unworthiness.

God of his infinite mercy, give us merciful hearts, that may incline us to all merciful acts, that so we may obtain mercy in the day of the Lord, even the mercies of Jesus Christ, to whom Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c. *Amen.* S E R

SERMON XXVII.

Preached at *Christ-Church, Canterbury, Lady-Day,*
in *Passion-Week.*

Of Purity in Heart.

MATT. v. 8.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall
see God.*

HERE is the origin and perfection of all virtue and holiness, which is the qualification, *purity of heart*. And here is the height and completion of all blessedness and felicity, which is the reward, *to see God*. Both superiour to all the other, both duties and beatitudes, here given forth by our Lord; or rather comprehensive of them. Purity of thought and desire! what sublime and excellent goodness must flow from thence? Vision, that is to say, the fullest and most intimate fruition of God! what immense bliss, what infinite satisfactions must eternally grow from that most glorious view and contemplation?

VOL. II.

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Now altho' the other virtues and good graces are as absolutely ensured of the proportionate rewards, peculiarly annexed to them; yet there will be a reluctance and diffidence in the use and suitableness of the means for the obtaining of the ends. Few would trust to poverty of spirit, for their advancement to a kingdom: or cast themselves into a mournful estate, in order to comfort: or be brought to think, that meekness in disposition and behaviour should be most conducive to their worldly attainments: or to be reviled and persecuted, should be an occasion of exceeding joy, and entitle them to an high reward. At least, men will be apt to imagine that less rigid methods, or perhaps the contrary, might be as sufficient and accepted for the accomplishment of those great ends.

But here every man that hath a notion of a God, of his essence and attributes, or of any benefit or enjoyment that may arise from his more immediate presence or nearer accesses, must in the same thought conclude, that purity of heart and mind is the most natural and genuine qualification (such as cannot be dispensed with) for such a communion. It is impossible to be conceived, that there should be any capacity in an impure soul, no more than in the soul of a brute, to be raised into a contemplation, much less into a nearer sight or view of the infinite majesty and excellency of God. And this we shall fully discover to common apprehension, if we consider,

I. What

I. What is this purity of heart.

II. How indispensable a qualification it must be for the blessing annexed; as, *first*, most proper and genuin for the practice of all virtues, and the exercise of all religious duties, which make the nearest approach unto God upon earth. And, *secondly*, that it must of necessity be the preparative disposition of soul for any vision or fruition of God in the kingdom of heaven.

III. We shall endeavour, as far as we are able, in a point so distant from our present knowledge, to discover wherein this blessedness, the height and completion of all felicity, consisteth, here promised to those that are of *a pure heart*. *Blessed are the pure in heart.*

I. We are to consider, what is this purity of heart. The heart, in scripture language at least, (however Naturalists may distinguish) is always taken for the seat and residence of thought and conception, of imagination and design, and likewise of concupiscence and natural desires, of passions and affections, and all sensual inclinations: so the rational and brutal faculties here meet together; the flesh and the spirit contesting and quarrelling one with another, in the very centre of a man's body; and from hence issue all good and evil into his conversation.

When the spirit and reason prevail, and above all, if the holy spirit of God be admitted, then the thoughts and inclinations will be genuine, clean, and pure; all the conceptions, designs, and purposes, unprejudiced, honest, and sincere; and the actions without, will shew from what fountain they stream forth. But when lusts and passions, and inordinate desires, get the prepossession or ascendancy in despite of our reason, and against the spirit of grace, then all is foul and filthy, base and dishonest within; and undeniable demonstrations are given without, of the rottenness of the heart, by the dissoluteness and corruption that flows into the conversation. But here an exception must be admitted, which frequently occurs, as in the filthy sins of hypocrisy, flattery, and dissimulation.

The hypocrite hath as foul a heart as any the vilest sinner of them all, yet sets forth the most specious appearances of sanctity and virtue. The dissembling flatterer, or false pretender to friendship, is a mere cut-throat in his heart, and yet his words and addresses are smooth and obliging: according to holy *David's* sensible complaint of a treacherous enemy, *Pf. lv. 21. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn-swords.* Here the streams seem to run clear, that flow from an impure fountain. But you must take notice that this specious appearance of religion, and these fair pretences of friendship, are themselves

selves the more offensive and provoking foulness: and downright irreligion and bare faced-ill-nature are like plain dealing, much fairer both to God and man.

What a vile sinner must the hypocrite be, that hath the Impudence to act all the parts of a godly man, when his heart is full of all impieties and impurities; and he cannot but know that it is God's inseparable property to be a searcher of it? We may easily ourselves make a certain estimate and judgment in this case; how exceeding offensive and provoking this dissonancy and disagreement between the heart and outward actings must necessarily be in the sight of God, by that detestation and abhorrence we should have ourselves of all the glavering shews and professions of friendship and kindness; had we the like view of the false heart and the secret designings of the pretender.

The impurities and corruptions of this nature, our Lord had very frequent and provoking occasions to set forth. The *Pharisees* were daily about him; and their hearts (a very loathsome sight) lay as open to him (tho' they did not think it) as their outward actings. And he pronounces all of a piece, *Matt. xii. 34, 35. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things.*

So Matt. xv. 19, 20. *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man:* by which our Lord would have them to know, that all the outward cleansings were in themselves shameful foulness, because of their mocking pretences, their hypocrisy in making a false shew so different from their hearts, being the aggravation of their guilt.

The formality and malignity of sin must be founded in the heart; for if there were no mind or reason to direct the action, it could be neither sinful nor offensive: therefore the actions of brutes, whatsoever turpitude may be in the nature of them, are no way accountable, neither can they be called sinful.

Now the heart and mind of a man, within its own inclosure, may sin with the highest aggravations of guilt, tho' nothing be produced into act. *Whosoever, saith our Lord, in the chapter before you, verse 28. looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart:* already, yes, and over and over again repeated in vicious ruminations, and carnal projecting, indulged and dwelt upon, in a continued train of uncleanness: which surely in the sight of God must amount to, or surpass the guilt of any single transgression. He that wallows in the sensuality of wicked thoughts, is vitiated through his whole nature, both in the inward and outward man: and it is no god-a-mercy (as we are used to say) nor
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will he find any from him, that he is only restrained by irresistible fears, or impossible opportunities.

Thus having laid open the corruption and impurity of hearts, from whence all sin hath its rise and original: let us seek out for a clean one, which is the spring and source of all virtue and holiness.

And here I ought to pray, from holy *David*,* *That the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, may be acceptable in thy sight, O God. And all of us together, that he would wash us thoroughly from our iniquities, and cleanse us from our sins; that he would create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us.* It is impossible any religion should find acceptance without purity; so the same experienced suppliant concludes: *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? i. e. to worship before him; he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully, (hath done no false-hearted thing, used no base means to deceive his neighbour) he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

Natural religion suggested as much through all its corruptions; *Ψυχῆς καθαρᾶς τόπον δικαιοσύνης ἐπὶ γῆς Θεὸς οὐκ ἔχει*, says the *Ethnick*; God hath not a more grateful habitation upon earth than a pure mind; it is more delightful to him

* *Psalms* xix. 14. *Psalms* li. 10. *Psalms* xxiv. 3, 4, 5.

than his own heaven, 'Ευσεβείν ὃ βροτοῖς γάνυμαι
τόσον ὅσον ὀλύμπῳ. *

The *Jewish* religion, that was established by divine authority, and immediate revelation, consisted chiefly of ritual expiations and purgations, which were to dispose and discipline them to moral and virtuous purity, and were all of them certain types of those substantial and more effectual methods and duties in the Gospel, prescribed for our entire purification: *The blood of Jesus Christ*, saith St. *John*, (Chap. i. 7. and cap. ii. 2.) *cleanseth us from all sin*. And all his precepts of purity and holiness were in their nature and design enjoined us for that purpose, to preserve and keep us in that clean condition. The *Jews* indeed absurdly and stupidly spent their whole time, and wasted all their religion, in mere out-side niceness and preciseness; our Lord's great business was to reduce all back to the heart, which they had driven outward. This was the prime and original purpose and intent of all the laws of God: and all his preaching and labour amongst them, concentered in this point: St. *Paul* decries all their pretences and boastings of righteousness, from the works of the law; because they went no deeper than a superficial observance, *Than outward washings and cleansings; but now*, says he, *the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned*, 1 Tim. i. 5.

* *Pythian Oracle*: 'I rejoice as much in pious souls, as in my own heaven.'

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That great work of regeneration or new birth, of absolute and indispensable necessity, (*we must be born again*) or what is farther implied in sanctification, is all comprehended in this *purity of heart and mind*; and when this is effected in a continued cleanness, an entire conversion is wrought, and a clear and regular conformity of life and conversation will be the genuin and delightful issue of this purity. In a word, an entire cleanness, all holiness, and righteousness, all faithfulness and integrity, all simplicity and sincerity, are implied in it; of very difficult attainment. Attainment, the highest perfection that man can arrive at, and therefore entitled to the most transcendent reward that can be expressed in words; *The pure in heart shall see God*. But chiefly it consisteth in these three qualifications.

1. An actual cleanness or clearness of all filthy lusts and inordinate desires, whether from the allurements of the world, or the suggestions of the flesh; either of malice, or covetousness, or ambition, or carnal inclinations. These make very foul work in the heart of man; and will most certainly keep out the spirit of God, and all Divine graces: and when men have accustomed themselves to cherish and indulge such thoughts, all religion soon vanishes, or falls into desuetude or formality: and the power of godliness is quite extinguished; and they soon come to that, which is the most desperate estate, hardness of heart and a reprobate sense: such foulness and putrefaction is a mortal symptom, and death

death and damnation must inevitably follow. It is impossible impure souls should ever see God.

There are habits of thinking, as well as habits of acting; and we are under mighty mistakes, if we imagine those of thought and deliberation, tho' they never see the light, can ever admit of any alleviating circumstances in the sight of God. His communion is chiefly with our hearts, and that more close, than ours can be one with another, in discourse or action. The lowliest wretch, if sober, and in his common wits, will forbear all talk and practice that tend to such vices in the company of those that are of known modesty and virtue. Is it obliging, or honouring of God, that we make bolder with him, and admit him as a confident to our most secret devices of sin, our hidden projectings of all manner of wickedness and uncleanness, which oftentimes we would not have laid open to the world, to gain it?

It is a deplorable estate, when we have renounced all modesty towards God, and a monstrous partiality, when at the same time we retain a little towards men: but God is the truest judge, and will prove the most severe one. We are naturally offended and affronted at stench and uncleanness in common conversation: we ought to acknowledge what we cannot but believe, *that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, without both detestation and vengeance.

2. There must be a purity and clearness in our thoughts, as to persuasion and opinion, especially

pecially such as relate to religion, to sound faith and doctrine; *The Fool*, says *David*, has said in his heart, *There is no God*; and if he got so far in his negative creed, he will think himself more a fool, if he makes not all the advantages of it. The other impure lusts and desires make way for this foolish persuasion, and a man will mightily incline to entertain and cherish such opinions, as will give him most licence, and least disturbance, in the freedom of his conversation: as that there is no such Being as a God, to call him to account for thoughts or actions; at least there is no such thing as providence; no such deity as troubles himself with governing the world, or inspecting the hearts and practices of men; no good or evil, no right or wrong, and so no judgment to come: and then he carries it with flying colours, that is, those of a fool still, that to follow our own appetites and inclinations must be our natural liberty; and therefore cannot be sinful or punishable. Then there is no such thing as revelation: all but the invention of politick states-men, or mere priest-craft, to hold us under the tyranny of fear, and drive us out of our rights and lawful enjoyments, settled upon us by nature in those propensities and strong inclinations, that are therefore so predominant and over-ruling in our very frame and constitution.

These conceits in our minds will make all other foul thoughts and actions to fit easy upon us; and we shall have no regard to the cleansing
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of our hearts and ways, but like affected flo-
 vens pride and please ourselves in our own fil-
 thiness. Besides it is a great gratification to
 wicked minds, to indulge novel opinions, espe-
 cially such as tend to sensuality and libertinism;
 and the fools take a great deal of pride and
 vanity in venting and publishing them to the
 world, to shew that they act by a principle,
 that they are not like other men, carried away
 by credulity and superstition, will not be im-
 posed upon by the easy devotees of religion.

These are impurities will stick by us, when
 lust and sensuality is got amongst the higher
 faculties, and countenanced by opinion and ap-
 probation; and the brute hath over-reasoned,
 and quite baffled the man. *St. Paul* (2 Tim.
 iii. 8. Tit. i. 15.) speaks of *men of corrupt
 minds, reprobate concerning the faith*; the great-
 est obstinacy is ever seen in the weakest people,
 and it is hard to set them right and clear,
 when even their mind and conscience is defiled.
 It will not be expected (I believe) that I should
 engage in the confutation of these doubty ar-
 guments; and all the advice that can be given
 is, to get ourselves out of the number and rank
 of fools, and to retrieve the authority and su-
 periority of our reason and understandings,
 whose natural right it is to be uppermost, and
 to clear them of all prejudices and corrupt
 opinions, and to think, and judge with the
 wisest, the most sober, serious, and religious
 men, whose reputation cannot but carry the
 preference and vogue in the judgment and se-
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cret sentiments, even of the most sensual livers.

2. *Purity of heart* doth necessarily imply all sincerity and integrity, both in our worship and service of God, and in all our actings and conversation one with another. No corners of our hearts must be kept for reserves or exceptions to an entire and hearty devotion, and to the truest and most perfect honesty. God will find us out at first view, and tho' man cannot, God will for him, *and bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.*

Some men live in perpetual disguise, treat God and man alike; never undress, never put off their masks and visards, always appear what they really are not: monsters to be shown not till the grand appearance at the day of judgment. They shall never see God, they can never look him in the face: it is too much to cheat in both worlds, the next must be plain-dealing, discovery, and execution.

These are gross impurities spread over our whole conversation, dispensed out in fulsome complements, in obsequious addreses, in officious and over-earnest professions of peculiar friendship, love, and honour, when the heart is a stranger to the pretences, and knows nothing of the matter, or is projecting quite different designs. For shame! let us bring our thoughts, and words, and actions, to a better agreement. No character is so truly great, as a man of sincerity and integrity. Our Lord himself seems to express such an admiration at
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the sight of such a person; *Behold! an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* The plainest simplicity makes the most acceptable address to God, and will give us the most lasting trust and credit amongst the best and wisest men.

II. We are to consider how indispensable a qualification *Purity of heart* must be for the blessing annexed. And this I am to set forth in two instances. 1. That it is most proper and genuin for the practice of all virtues, and the exercise of all religious duties, which is the nearest approach we can make unto God upon earth. 2. That it must of necessity be the preparative disposition of soul, for any vision or fruition of God in the kingdom of heaven.

1. That it is most proper and genuin for the practice of all virtues, and the exercise of all religious duties. Purity is essential to all virtue, or as the schools speak, conversible with it. This gives shine, and lustre, to every good action, and we cannot pronounce higher of it, than that it is done clean; which betokens all honour and honesty, all fairness and clearness of design in the performance: and when it is sullied with any sinister or selfish ends, done in hypocrisy, or out of vain glory; then how base and foul doth it look, how much do we nauseate it, even sometimes more than the opposite vice?

But in the duties of religion, which include all moral obligations under the strictest injunctions,

ons, we shall have a fairer view of this purity of heart. King *David* hath given us the compleatest character of true religion, and its happy advantages, when he says, *Psalms* xix. 8, 9. *The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever.* All the approaches we can make unto him, must be by religion. And with the pure, he will shew himself pure: he will enter into a closer communion with us, than we can be sensible of, we are in an impure estate: our Lord speaks of a certain abode and dwelling with us, (*John* xiv. 23.) *My Father and I will come unto you, and make our abode with you:* by which must implied the most intimate conversation and communication with us, and the convenience of all the graces of the holy spirit in our hearts; common decency will tell us, they must be kept pure and clean for the reception.

God's immensity filleth all things, yet his especial presence and cohabitation, his *Shechinah* and glory, he doth as 'twere confine to places that are pure and sanctified, and of all such he hath ever given the preference to a pure heart; the temple of his own choice, and his own making, the beauty of holiness. It is said (*Psalms* x. 4.) of the wicked, *that God is not in all their thoughts;* he is either thrown out by *Atheism*, or shut out by filthiness and uncleanness; but however, he is no stranger to their devices, he understandeth their thoughts afar off: he is present there as he is *in hell* (*Psalms* cxxxix. 8.) to their confusi-

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on and everlasting destruction. To prepare and qualify ourselves for this most transcendent of all blessings attainable upon earth, the divine inhabitation, and more especial residence of God in our hearts, let us with all diligence look to the purity and cleanness of all our christian duties. We can name none but what may even be cast out amongst our sinful corruptions, that do not proceed from a pure heart. I will instance in some few, and the rest will be concluded from them.

1. All fastings and humiliations, all that is to raise us to those high duties of mortification and self-denial, (more especially enjoined us by the church at this time) do wholly consist in this cleansing and purifying work, to clear us from our corruptions, and to qualify us for the merits of Christ's death and passion.

The grand duty of repentance comprehends them all; and that itself is all but grimace and mockery in the out-side testifications of it, unless the heart be purified within. What encouraging and enravishing condescension doth the Prophet express from the mouth of God, *Isa. lvii.*

15. Thus saith the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Contrition denotes labour and pains bestowed upon our hearts; and he is delighted to dwell even amidst the sorrows and troubles of our minds, the anxiety and solicitude of our souls, when we are making

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ing all clean for his reception and entertainment. He is a spirit, *and must be worshiped in spirit and truth*, which is purity and sincerity of heart.

2. All our devotion in prayer, and praise, must proceed out of a pure heart: there is no sort of assistance in this duty can come from the spirit of God, unless our own be purified and cleared of all corrupt inclinations and designs: how can we be intense and earnest, when our thoughts are wholly taken up another way? how is it possible we should prevail, when our hearts do not join in the petition, but are employ'd in carnal or wordly desires and pursuits? In our minds we commune with God, as we do with one another in discourse: how undecent and provoking must it be to come upon serious business, to men that are known to be grave and wise, and our tongues all the while roving upon quite different matters, or such as are vain, disgustful, and vexatious? how much more affronting to superiours, to come upon address and supplication for some favour and munificence, and in our behaviour and talk, (for they know not thoughts) to be impertinent and rambling, or rude and abusive? *David* intends the allusion, when he speaks on this very subject, *Psalms cxxiii. 2. Behold! as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress: so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us*: meaning that we should bear the same reverence, and awful respect in our hearts to the Divine majesty, who is a searcher of them,

as the most diligent servants do in their faithful and watchful attendance upon the commands of their superiours. Purity of heart in prayer will keep us close to the business we are upon; and then God himself will attend to us, and answer the petitions we lay before him. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer*, Psalm lxvi. 18. Let us examine our devotions by this requisite; impurity of thoughts before the throne of grace cannot be less culpable and shameful than the most undecent behaviour in the sight of our superiours to whom we owe our livelihood and subsistence: and then our prayers will be turned into sin, will become of loathsom savour instead of sweet incense, and rise up in judgment against us.

3. Hearing of the word of God, is another duty, that calls for the attendance of a pure heart; indeed will turn much to the damage of our souls, and aggravation of our guilt without it. This is a darling duty with some people; often over-prized, because they are hearers only, having itching ears but insensible hearts; never take care to cleanse them and put them in order for the receiving of the word, but run out the greatest part of their religion in this listening devotion. What wretched crops do we read of in the parable of the sower? and all occasioned through the corruption of the heart, either hardened or made barren by habitual uncleanness, or choked up with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, or clouded and darkened for want of understanding: and none
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of the seed comes to good, but that which happily fell into an honest and good heart, *Such as keepeth the word and understandeth it, and bringeth forth fruit in all answerable proportions,* Matt. xiii. Luke viii.

4. Another duty of eminent note, must come from a pure heart, or else is merely cast away; and that is, our *charity*. Give alms, saith our Lord, *of such things as you have, and behold all things are clean unto you,* Luke xi. 41. and says St. James (i. 27.) *Pure religion and undefiled before God, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.*

The Pharisees indeed were nauseous and noisy in their charity: and their very liberality was a certain sort of fordidness, because they were base and designing, vain glorious and self-ended; sounded a trumpet, and made a noise, when they were to do a little office and kindness, or let drop a small pittance of their bounty and pretended generosity. For this reason our Lord throws out their charity, among the rest of their vile hypocrisies and knaveries, as foul as the worst of them. They might have learnt of a Prophet of their own, whom they esteemed much greater than him, *Isaiah i. 16, 17.* That purity and cleanness must precede and illustrate, make valuable and acceptable, all acts and offices of goodness and benefaction. *Wash ye, make you clean, put ye away the evil of your doings, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge (for) the*

fatherless, plead for the widow. There is a pretence of doing good turns, quite out as bad as doing ill ones: and if we are not clean and clever in the matter, we had as good go on in the plain dealing, *of loving no body but ourselves.*

5. Lastly, all solemn and devout preparation for the holy sacrament, which we are now making, is in one word *purity of heart*: did we keep but that clean, beyond the formality even of a whole week's preciseness and abstemiousness, we should at all times be ready, and fit to give reception to our Lord. We ourselves cannot but prefer cleanliness to pomp and show, and nauseate and ridicule the latter, tho' never so sumptuous, when adorned and set forth with the decency of the former: purity is God's very nature and essence; and it is the soul that is his image, after which we are made, and that similitude is quite lost and defaced, whilst we keep our hearts impure, we are less like him, than the lowest orders of his creatures, throughout the whole creation. We must likewise take care to continue and preserve this purity and cleanness; if we return to our corruptions, to our loosenesses and intemperance, to our freedoms in vice and pleasures, to our unclean thoughts and actings, we do in a manner reject and throw out, or else basely betray him whom we have so fairly received. The impurities that follow are commonly most malevolent, and pernicious: it is said of *Judas, that after he had received the sop, Satan entered into him*; tho' at the solemn institution of the holy ordinance, he sate as demure

demure as the best of them, and put the question with as bold an appearance, and said, *Master, is it I?*

Thus purity of heart is the proper, genuine and inseparable qualification of *all* moral virtues and Christian duties. If you engage in any others distinct from these, I have instanced in, you will easily discover the same natural aptitude of purity to its performance: it must be done clean, or else it will lose both its name and nature. *As for the pure*, saith the *wise man*, *his work is right*, Prov. xxi. 8. done upon the square, as we say, fair and unexceptionable: all his religion, and all other the actions and transactions of his life, have a certain serenity and lustre, that visibly encircles them, that doth shew from what light they stream forth, a clear and prejudiced understanding, a sound and rational faith, an uncorrupted will, clean and moderate desires and affections, all inward satisfactions, and from a sedate and peaceable temper and disposition of heart and mind. *Unto the pure*, says St. Paul, (Tit. i.) *all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled*: and judge what are the effects; they profess *that they know God, but in works they deny him*, being abominable and disobedient, and *unto every good work reprobate*.

To conclude: Christianity is a religion of the most refined purity and sanctity; the exaltation even of morality to the highest strains of virtuous, that is, clean and holy living; and the

reformation and amendment, of the preceding revelation by *Moses* and the Prophets, which is the main subject of this chapter of my Text. *Christ came to fulfil the law*, to reduce shadows to substance, all the commandments of God to their native purity, and intrinsic obligation, that he may not be put off with slight and superficial observances, whilst sincerity and integrity, honesty and justice, faith, mercy, and truth, all the natural issue and offspring of a pure heart, are wholly disregarded.

For this great purpose the Son of God came himself into the world, to take upon him our nature, to refine and to raise it to a capacity of glory, to be himself too *the immaculate Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; who therefore gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify* (Tit. ii. 14.) *unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*; as he is represented by the Prophet *Malachi*: that he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's sope; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. In order to it, he was conceived and born of a holy virgin, whose signal character and endowment was *purity*, for which *she was highly favoured with God, and the Lord was with her; and the Holy Ghost*, that purifieth and sanctifieth all things, descended upon her; and the power of the highest overshadowed her. God, who is infinitely knowing, did see into the purity of her, that

that she was *Gratia plena*, fulfilled with all divine graces, *and pure and holy in all manner of conversation*; and so qualified above all women to bear in her womb *that holy thing, that was to be born of her, who was the Son of God, most high*. It was the purity of her heart, the inviting beauty of her mind, that entitled her to this preference in the favour of her God. *Magis beata fuit* (as the holy Fathers were wont to speak) *quod mente quam quod corpore Christum concepisset*; her pure mind was more blessed than the womb that bare him: and this she ever made the repository of all pious thoughts and meditations; for it is said of her, *that she kept all her Son's sayings in her heart*: these must beget pure thoughts indeed, and become full employment for the most capacious, the most intelligent and contemplating minds. I can never recommend better, than by this example of his holy-thinking Mother, the sayings of the holy Jesus; all the kind things he spoke of us, and for us, all the injunctions and directions he gave forth for the purity of our hearts and ways, and for the salvation of our souls; to raise us from the sublime contemplation of God and his laws, which is the highest blessing we can attain to in this life, to the *beatifick vision*, and most glorious fruition, and all his promises to all eternity. And this should bring me to that part of my Discourse which relates to that high reward of *seeing God*, which I fully purposed to speak upon; but I find will take up more time than now

remains, and therefore must refer it to another opportunity.

*Now to God Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
be ascribed, &c. Amen.*

SERMON XXIX.

Preached at *Christ-Church, Canterbury, Lady-Day,*
in *Passion-Week.*

Of Purity in Heart.

MATT. v. 8.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall
see God.*

I Should be unjust to so glorious a subject, of the greatest moment and nearest concern to us, the very essence and perfection of all virtue and religion, and the most transcendent blessing to incite our practice, if I should dismiss it without farther prosecuting of it, according to the method, and in the parts I purposed, and I have already laid down.

Upon the *first* general head, I endeavour'd to lay before you the nature and excellency of this purity of heart, and to give it its true lustre: I also display'd, and laid open, the impurities of our hearts in various instances of wicked and

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unclean imaginations and conceptions, false and erroneous opinions, base designs and intentions, all the unfair inconsistencies of insincerity, hypocrisy and dishonesty, which so much defile the man, take up his whole thoughts, are indulged and cherished, and lying all open to the view of an all-seeing God, must have all the aggravations of guilt, and be exceedingly provoking in his sight, whose both right and delight it is to dwell in our hearts.

Upon the *second* general head, I was to shew you how indispensable a qualification, *purity of heart* must necessarily be for the blessing annexed, to see God; and I proceeded so far upon this point, as to make it even demonstrable in *One* instance, that it is inseparable from all good life and conversation, the most proper and genuine disposition of soul for the practice of all virtues, and the exercise of all religious duties, which must be the nearest approach we can make unto God upon earth, and is the first step towards the glorious blessing in the Text. I am now in a

Second instance, which as yet I have only named, to make it as evident, That *purity of heart* must of necessity be the preparative qualification, for any vision or fruition of God we can believe or hope to attain to in the kingdom of heaven. And then I shall conclude with the

III. Third general head, on which I promised, as far as able in a point so distant from our present knowledge, To discover wherein this blessedness,

sedness, the height and completion of all felicity, consisteth: But before that, I am to make it farther evident upon the second instance, That *purity of heart* must of necessity be the preparative qualification for it.

As we improve in holiness and in the practice of virtue, we shall even at this distance have a very inviting prospect, of this transcendent felicity; our understandings will thereby be much enlightened, our affections and desires much animated and raised: we shall be refined in our thoughts and contemplations, stand in a clearer light, and see much more than the wicked, who are in darkness, as the Apostle (*Col. i. 13.*) expresses it, under the *power of darkness*, perfectly blinded and kept dark by their corrupt and vitious lives; so that they can have no glimmerings, no notion or apprehension of this glorious vision. Common reason must inform us, that uncleanness and pollution must necessarily and naturally cloud and obstruct our intellectuals, so that we can form no manner of conception what this blessedness shall be, and then we shall be dull and listless in setting about this cleansing work, in purifying our hearts, and qualifying our souls for the closer and more intimate knowledge and fruition of God, which is imported in that comprehensive expression of the highest and fullest happiness, *in seeing of him.*

It is not therefore a mere notion, but a very natural and genuin contemplation founded upon reason, that virtue and holiness are not only enjoined us by the natural and positive laws of God,

as merely acts of obedience to his will, but that by the habits of good living we prepare, educate, and bring up our souls in a behaviour and conversation suitable to an heavenly society: so that the practice of virtue and holiness here, is the necessary erudition of an immortal soul, to fit and qualify it for the angelic life, in the immediate presence of God to all eternity. Not but the exercise of many virtues, of many Christian graces and duties, must cease and be superseded, by victory, praise, and everlasting fruition; yet the frame and temper the soul is cast into by this pious conversation upon earth (which is a state of probation) is that preceding purity and sanctification necessarily required of us, both to dispose us for those sublime and heavenly exercises, and to capacitate us for the beatifick vision, which is infinite and everlasting bliss and glory, and for which an impure spirit must be utterly inapt and unqualified.

St. Paul speaks of a conversation in heaven, *Phil. iii. 20, 21.* a certain initiation here into that we shall live hereafter. *From whence, saith he, we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile bodies, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.* This heavenly conversation upon earth is that preparative state of purity and holiness, that is to qualify us for and entitle us to that higher station of bliss and glory, the purchase of Christ Jesus, who having all power given unto him in heaven and earth, can alone by his

his omnipotence effect this happy change or transformation. Upon this consideration have some pronounced so hard upon a death-bed repentance, as what if effectual must be by extraordinary assistances of God's grace, and if accepted, by as great allowances of his mercy. Because the penitent must be supposed to pass from a vicious impure estate of life, without any intervening acts of purity and holiness, into an heavenly serenity, the purest society of Saints and Angels, and the immediate presence of God.

It is true *the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin*, there are no limits to its infinite virtue: and the benefit of it cannot be denied at any time to a true penitent. The thief on the cross, in *articulo mortis*, in the very instant of dying, was assured of it: the all-healing blood was just then shedding forth, and he was near the virtue and operation; and a miraculous cure and salvation of a soul was to consummate those numerous ones that he had wrought upon bodies. Besides too we cannot but allow, that the grace of God can make a quick dispatch of that otherwise most laborious duty of repentance, which requires time as well as vigour: our Apostle, St. Peter's both remorse and recovery were effected in an instant, and raised to full strength and bitterness; but it's said our Lord turned, and looked upon him, and then he remembered: a cast of His look, if present, or the secret conveyance of it, if in a distant room, must be of miraculous influence, of much greater force and more startling terror, than the louder admonition by the cock's crowing. But

But extraordinary instances and extraordinary means are not to be relied upon, without great presumption and very frequent danger of failing. The ordinary course, and that indeed we can with safety and by promise trust to, must be an actual purity and an habitual sanctity of life, *before we go hence and be no more seen.* Nicodemus his interrogatory, *How can a man be born again when he is old?* was his ignorance (tho' a ruler of the Jews, and well inclined to Jesus) of the nature of a spiritual birth; such a regeneration as is to be effected by the spirit of God, and is to be manifested in newness and reformation of life; (his thoughts running upon a common or carnal one.) But here the change and transiion must be more unconceivable from a very impure estate, to pass through the foulness of a mortal distemper, and the gates of death, into the most refined immortality, to shine as the righteous shall do, *like the firmament, or as the stars for ever and ever.*

The Apostle St. Paul, even when he is proving the resurrection of the body, tell us, that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption*: if the body be laid down in filthiness, in the habits of sin and corruption, unclean and unreformed, it can never rise in glory: there is no cleansing in the grave, the earth is no refining element; our cleansing work must be all over before our dissolution. The same Apostle, on the same subject (1 Cor. xv. 29.) urges an argument with an interrogation, which always casts the

the absurdity on those that do not acknowledge it conclusive ; *Else what shall they do, which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?* the Text hath been ever thought abstruse and mystical; but whether the customary practice was a vicarious baptism for a deceased friend or relative, or a personal one, upon the prospect or approach of death, when given over or taken for dead ; *Quomodo dicimus aliquem sublatum aut derelictum pro mortuo*, as *Eftius* notes upon the place; or whether it was a solemn washing of the expired corpse or body, is not very material to be decided: the argument was of unanswerable force upon those that so strictly used and enjoined such a rite; because it was a well-known and received opinion amongst them, that they did it with a respect to an happy resurrection; but the practice must be most absurd and unaccountable, if it did not denote the absolute necessity of precedent purifications both of soul and body, in order to this high advancement of both to glory and immortality.

If I wash thee not, saith our Lord to our Apostle St. Peter, *thou hast no part with me*, John xiii. 8. The good disciple in good manners declined his master's doing that office, as too great a condescension, but when he perceived he laid so much weight and stress upon it, then he cried out, *Lord! not my feet only, but my hands and my head*. And therefore be sure did our Saviour so solemnly and almost sacramentally set himself upon this lowly work; laid aside his

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garments, took a towel and girded himself, *accingitur ad opus*, and then fell to washing his Disciple's feet; to shew them of what absolute necessity *purity* was for those great things they were to engage in, and for all the glorious benefits of his Gospel and kingdom. Upon the *external* operation (for an all-cleansing hand was employ'd) he pronounces them *clean every whit, but not all*: one vile wretch was excepted, the pravity and baseness of whose heart and designs, was well known: and those foulest of vices, avarice and treachery, which are ever instigated by an inbred cruelty and ill-nature, are commonly so deep rooted, that they become past all cure and cleansing; do not exceed an All-mighty power, but are deservedly cast out of its regard.

The great purifying ordinance of Baptism itself, in the first times of Christianity, was commonly, tho' too venturously deferred toward the last periods of life, for this purpose, to clear away original and actual corruption, to obviate the hazard of future lapses, and to go off the world clean and regenerate in this last, by the blessed effects of that holy sacrament, which Christ Jesus had so solemnly instituted in order to purity and holiness, *without which no man shall see the Lord*.

Nay, upon this account and consideration, because of this impossibility of *seeing God* without *purity of heart*, so reasonably believed, some have thought of severer methods of purgation by another element, and have
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fell into the superstitious conceits of previous refinings and cleansings by a certain purgatory fire: the earliest of *Romish* errors; I do not mean their modern doctrines of purgatory, with their mercenary indulgences, masses, and pardons, of a very late date and most corrupt original; but a very primitive opinion, mentioned and maintained by some of the ancients, (otherwise not unorthodox) of a certain probatory fire, that all were to pass through, and to suffer more or less in it, and to be refined and purified by it. However erroneous and absurd such doctrines were, and without the least authority from the word of God; yet this is true reason and sound divinity, that must be acknowledged by all good Christians, that might give occasion to these inventions; That the heart, that is to say, the whole man must some way or other, be purified and cleansed, before he can be raised to the sublimest beatitude of seeing God.

They grossly mistook in the manner and time of their purgation: it must be done, and wholly compleated upon earth, by cleansing our hearts and ways, that is, reforming our lives, both as to thinking, and as to acting: by changing all our habits of vice and uncleanness, into habits of virtue and holiness; for the performance of which, upon our due application and easy access, the holy spirit of God will be ever ready to come into our assistance. This must be done, an entire reformation and purification of heart and life must be thoroughly effected

effected here in this world, or an everlasting purgatory and expiation, not that of the *Papists*, but hell-fire must be the adequate punishment. And this work will require time, our purity must be permanent, and hold its integrity and sincerity, through all temptations : for when our hearts are languishing, expiring, and beating their last ; when our appetites and inclinations are, in the natural and common sense, really mortified and perished, and all objects have lost their inviting allurements ; it is no wonder, nor at all thank-worthy, that vain thoughts and imaginations, filthy lusts and desires should cease and vanish ; that ambition and covetousness should remit their rancour and vigour, and let fall all prosecutions of their designs ; that there should be some faint appearances, and little glimmering symptoms of charity, humility, and good-nature : alas ! it is but what we call a *lightening before death*. What purity of heart can there be, when no filth or guilt hath been cleared away ? as death leaves us, so judgment will find us ; *corruption cannot inherit incorruption* ; the impurities we carry out of this world, will stick by us for ever in everlasting remorse ; the worm may stench for ever, tho' never die. In a word, *purity of heart* implies our restitution to the likeness and image of God, after which we were made, and which hath been so miserably defaced by our corruptions ; as I have had occasion to observe already, as, that purity is his very nature and essence, it is diffused through all his attributes, and is visible in all his laws,

in all the actings of his Almighty power and providence, through the creation and government of the universe. Nothing do we know or believe of him, from reason or revelation, but what is purity and truth: it is his very image, and the most express character of the Divine nature: and as we bear up to this image upon earth, by *purity of heart*, by cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord*; so in a closer union and blessedness, shall we bear up to his image in heaven. The harmony of heavenly society is not to be violated or disturbed; nothing but what is like him, hath due proportions of purity, can ever be suffered to dwell with him. *Secundum hoc homo dicitur factus ad imaginem Dei, quod Deum conspiciere potest*, saith St. *Augustin*:* Upon this account, man is made after the image of God, that he might be capacitated to see him; what then is qualification here, is there the fruition. To be *pure in heart*, is to be like him, and to be like him, is to see him; according to St. *John's* account of both, 1 Epist. Chap. iii. 2, 3. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is: and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he his pure.* And this brings me to the third General Head, on which

* Vid. *Aquin'd sum. supplem.* 3 part. quest. 92. artic. 2.

III. I am to endeavour, as far as I am able, in a point so distant from all present knowledge, to discover wherein this blessedness, the height and completion of all felicity consisteth, here promised to those *that are of a pure heart*: *Blessed, &c. for they shall see God.*

‘The seeing God in this Text, as a well known Annotator hath observ’d, ‘may not ‘perhaps, altogether look so far off, as the ‘beatifical Vision in another world; but be ‘first fulfilled in the work of grace, in opening our eyes to behold the wonderful things ‘of God’s law; for this belongs peculiarly to ‘the *purity of heart*, as that excludes both ‘hypocrisy and uncleanness, filthiness of the ‘flesh and spirit. Thus saith *Origen*, did God ‘exhibit himself to be seen of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, not to the eyes of their bodies, ‘*ἀλλὰ καθαῖα καρδία*, but to the pure heart.’* Many excellent discourses towards this purpose we have from the light of nature among the Philosophers; especially, the followers of *Pythagoras*, † when they speak of their *καθαρίκη*, the happy method of purifying the heart.

The nearest communication we can have with God in this world, must arise from hence: they are our impurities that keep us at a distance, and forbid the entrance of the Holy Spirit: could we keep our hearts and minds clean

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* *Orig. cont. Cels. lib. 1. p. 285.*
nus, *Hierocles*.

† *Porph. Jamb. Plot. Marinus*.

and pure, our knowledge of God and divine things would wonderfully improve; our affections and desires towards them would every day encrease, and we may with much assurance believe, God would more and more communicate himself unto us.

If any thing can give us in this world, a taste or antepast of that high refined enjoyment of seeing God in the next, it must be sought among the sweet delights of an holy and virtuous life. That serenity and chearfulness of mind, that peace and quiet of conscience, that placid and regular government over our lusts and passions, which arise from *purity of heart*, and are kept up in life and vigour by our knowledge and love of God and his religion; as they are the truest and most necessary preparatives for a celestial conversation, so do they give us the most exact and typical resemblance of those unconceivable and unexpressible joys and eternal satisfactions which are implied in that most comprehensive blessedness of *seeing God*.

The Schoolmen * abound with many refined notions upon this sublime subject, which they call the *beatifick vision*, but they will not inform the judgment, nor raise the affections: for to look into the essence of God, and there to see and know all other things which he sees and knows, (which is their doctrine they labour to make out) is a very unintelligible and less edifying account of happiness: therefore from hence no satisfaction can be expected.

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* Aquin. sum. quest. 92. artic. 3. supplem. 3. part.

The Holy Ghost in Scriptures, with great condescension to our imperfect estate, is pleased to accommodate himself to the measures of our own apprehensions; and to have some regard too to our natural passions and affections; and therefore sets forth to us the happiness and misery of the next life, under the representations and descriptions of sensible things. Now *seeing* is the most exquisite of all our senses: light itself, that glorious body diffus'd thro' the universe, seems to be created for its use and delight: it fetches in the largest circuit of objects, and brings in the truest and quickest satisfactions; it bears testimony beyond all other senses, it gives the surest and ultimate evidence in all things: and the highest certainty and demonstration, depends upon its view: it is likewise of the purest and most spiritual nature, and comes nearest in resemblance to a divine and intellectual faculty. So that *seeing of God*, whether with the eye of a refined and glorified body, or that of the mind and understanding, or of both together in their improved, dilated, and exalted capacities, doth most fully and comprehensively express the closest and most intimate, the clearest and most immediate, and the most certain and satisfactory knowledge and fruition of him. And herein, our present apprehensions will inform us, must consist the highest blessedness of a rational and immortal soul, created after the image of God. And when we have taken a right survey and account of all the dissatisfactions that arise from a doubting and distrusting faith,

a dark and imperfect knowledge, a vexatious curiosity, and likewise of all the evils of our human estate, at this distance from God, we must conclude that all will clear up into the highest felicity, the most ravishing delights of all knowledge and fruition, whenever we attain to this blessed vision. Imagine then but what the mind may enjoy in tranquillity, when eased and released from all the grievances, impurities, and cumbrances of the flesh, when it is advanced to the immediate presence of God, and hath eyes fitted to behold him in the fullest and most immense scope of delight and satisfactions: when it is everlastingly employ'd, and every moment enravished in the contemplation, and love, and praise, and imitation of his divine perfection; then have you some faint idea and resemblance of this immortal bliss and glory, implied in this promise to the *pure in heart, of seeing God*; and yet still in an infinity of degrees is it beyond all that conception. I need not beg pardon for being insufficient to speak more fully and clearly upon what is incomprehensible.

St. Paul, tho' he had been caught up into the third heaven, and was admitted into paradise, and heard unutterable words, as you read, 2 Cor. 12. *Yet all was silence and astonishment*: he knew not whether *in the body or out of the body*; the glories were too big for his capacities, and he could make no other report, bring no other intelligence from those regions of bliss, *than that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared*

pared for them that love him. Since then we can come no nearer this subject, so vastly out of our reach, let us turn back and look to our hearts. The reward is never the less inviting or valuable, because our curiosity cannot beforehand be gratified in the discovery: what is not to be comprehended, may the more incite our soaring ambition, if we believe it certain: let us set ourselves to this cleansing work, however difficult it might be; we cannot be ignorant of the necessity or method of it. Purity is most easy and genuin, and pleasing to our natures: and hath many attending conveniencies and satisfactions in this life: and in all relations, filthiness and corruption are a diminution of our happiness, and do lessen our enjoyments in all that belongs to us; there is neither splendour nor true contentment in riches or honour, without cleanness: the richest attire, the noblest furniture, are undervalued or disparaged, if they want that less chargeable accomplishment of being clean; how much greater then must both the satisfaction and the glory be, to keep strictly to the decency of purity and cleanness in all our thoughts and actions.

Let us begin with our hearts, and root out from thence all unclean and ungodly imaginations, desires and designs: *Keep thy heart,* says the *wise man*, (Prov. iv. 23.) *with all diligence,* or above all keeping, *for out of it are the issues of life.* There are habits of thinking as well as of acting, as I have had occasion already to observe upon this subject; let us endeavour to

our utmost to break ourselves of those that are wicked and polluted; and let us accustom ourselves to a clean, to a rational, and religious way of thinking. There is infinite scope for holy meditation; as vast and extensive, as is thought it self. St. Paul hath set our thoughts a very large task to keep them employ'd, *Phil. iv. 8. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest (or venerable) whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things:* And again, *Col. iii. 2. Set your affections upon things above,* *προετίτε τὰ ἄνω*; the original word primarily denotes the intenseness of our minds and souls on heavenly objects, *think of things above (sursum corda)* and when once our hearts are lifted up, and fixed on those sublime contemplations, they will not easily be brought down to think with any delight upon abject earthly things. If we could so happily change the whole scene of our vain and impure imaginations, and roving thoughts, we should find to our greater satisfaction and contentment, there would flow from thence, into our words and actions, as many good things as our Lord hath reckoned up bad ones, *which proceed out of a polluted heart, and so much defile a man*; you have a very black list of them, *Mark vii. 20*, and following verses.

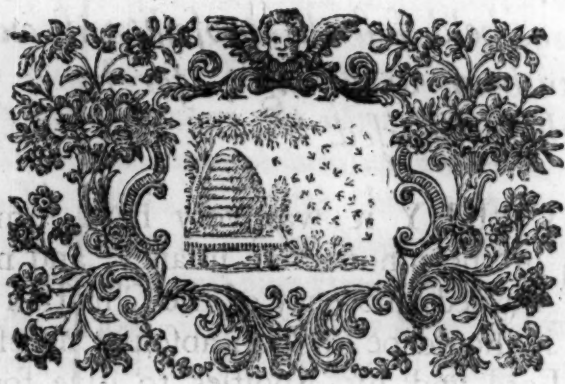
To conclude: Christianity is a religion of the most refined purity and sanctity; the exaltation
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even of morality to the highest strains of virtuous, that is, clean and holy living; and the reformation and amendment of the preceding revelation by *Moses* and the Prophets, which is the main subject of the *chapter* of my Text. *Christ came to fulfil the law*, to reduce shadows to substance, all the commandments of God to their native purity and intrinsic obligation; that he may not be put off with slight and superficial observances, whilst sincerity and integrity, honesty and justice, faith, mercy, and truth, all the natural issue and offspring of a pure heart, are wholly disregarded.

His own example we cannot set forth, by a more shining character, than by calling it, what it really and illustriously was, *a life of the most refined purity*; our redemption is founded in it: his infinite merits arise from his infinite purity: *Ye know*, says our Apostle St. Peter, (1 Peter i. 18, 19.) *ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot. And to this end*, saith St. Paul, (Tit. ii. 14.) *Christ gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*. In a word, the purity of his Gospel, the purity of his example, the purity of his immaculate redemption, is all lost upon us, of no comfort or benefit at all, but the aggravation of our guilt and damnation, if we do not answer the conditions of this holy covenant, by the purity of our own hearts: *for blessed,*

*blessed, and only blessed, are the pure in heart,
and only they shall see God.*

Let us be ever then, with the Holy David, calling out for All-mighty assistance to our own endeavours, that God would create in us a clean heart, and renew a right Spirit within us: that he would not cast us away from his presence, nor take his Holy Spirit from us, which we beg for Jesus Christ's sake; To whom Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, and three Persons, be ascribed all majesty, power, and adoration, now and for evermore. Amen.



SER.

SERMON XXX.

Preached at *Christ's-Church, Canterbury,* on *St. James's-Day.*

The Nature, Obligations, and Encouragements of holding fast the Profession of our Faith.

Heb. x. 23.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering ; for he is faithful that promised.

SURELY it was very hard times even in the inoffensive infancy, and most unspotted innocency of the Christian church, that it should be of such absolute necessity, for our Lord and his Apostles to give forth such repeated injunctions, for confessing and owning, keeping and defending the Faith, as in the utmost perils and extremities ; for *holding fast our profession, for standing fast in one spirit and one mind,* and striving together for the faith of the Gospel:

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Gospel: as tho' tyrants, and tygers, and devils, and to put all the savages and monsters together, the inhuman *Moabite*, the factions of *Jews* and *Heathens* and *Hereticks* (those rioters under the *Gospel* not yet quelled) were all united to ravish their religion from them.

Our Saviour more especially bids his Disciples, *Matt. x. 17. beware of men*, and tells them *John ii. 24, 25. that he knew all men: and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man*: sharp reflection and just satyr upon the species! maugre all other the enemies of true religion, which earth and hell could produce, that upper herd of animals, called men, subtle, designing, pretendedly rational-politick men, by his prescience were discovered as the likeliest of all God's creatures, to shut him and his religion out of the world. Unlucky villany! that there should be but one all-sufficient Saviour, one Mediator betwixt God and man; and yet man, the sole object of that Divine infinite love, should prove the sole-officious and spiteful instrument to cross all the kindest purposes of heaven.

But the times are better amended with us, and 'tis well they are: for compliance and not suffering, is the present genius of our age. Indeed we have not the like hardships to encounter, yet is our religion put upon tryals, tho' not fiery ones, and we ought on all occasions to give demonstrable testimonies of our resolute adhesion to all its doctrines and precepts; and so the Text continues to be seasonable both ad-

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vice and encouragement to all Christians, that they *hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised;* and therefore from them both, our business will be to consider;

I. In what this duty consists, and how far it extends, *to hold fast the profession of our faith.*

II. The indispensable obligation upon us to this: *let us hold fast, &c.*

III. The encouragement to the resolute performance of this duty; *for he is faithful that promised.*

I. In what this duty consists, and how far it extends, *to hold fast the profession of our faith.*

Altho' we are safe, and far enough out of the way from *Jewish* and *Heathen* persecutors, and we hope by the good providence of God we are as secure (tho' not so distant) from their bloody imitators in the *Church of Rome*, so that there will be no need of extending this duty of *holding fast our profession* to the case of martyrdom, or to lay down rules of behaviour and bravery, how we should bear up against enemies that have no power, nor are in any likelihood to hurt us: yet is it necessary to have always such resolutions about us: we must at all times be in a ready posture to encounter all the various difficulties of our Christian warfare; otherwise our religion cannot be of sound proof.

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For as the severe command given to that forward young man in the Gospel, of *selling his estate and giving it to the poor*, or the practice of the first Christians of doing the like, was not a duty to continue, obliging, and actually incumbent upon all the Christian believers to the end of the world: so neither can this duty of engaging in sufferings and dying for the cause without a necessary call; because of the different times and other circumstances of the church: yet we ever say, they are duties habitually, and *in promptu*, tho' they cannot be actually obliging upon all men, that is, that Christian cannot be found at heart, and of true faith in the sight of God, which is not possessed with such a resolute disposition of soul, as to suffer all manner of extremities, whether of life or fortune, rather than forego any fundamental doctrine or obliging precept of his religion.

He that is of a tardy and listless religion is apt to think himself holy enough, because he is zealous (the height of some people's devotion) for the quiet enjoyment of his profession, when perhaps he hath rather reason to mistrust that he hath not religion enough to bear a tryal; but let him withal be assured that then he hath not enough for the kingdom of heaven.

There is no doubt of it, but the quiet of the Church is the greater blessing of heaven, and much preferable to the old tempestuous state of persecution; if we rightly used and improved the blessing, and could make as good
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proficiency in holiness: yet it is a question whether so many prizes are won, or heaven fills so fast: for the martyr's crown, always thought to be the highest attainment, and the most exceeding weight of glory, the immediate beatifick, must be left to those ages, as the claim of the suffering Saints.

Besides, as to the Church militant upon earth, it is well known in history, that ambition and covetousness, schism and faction, and all the ill-effects of sloth and degeneracy among Christians, are dated from this cessation of persecution; as long peace and cessation of arms doth usually intimidate a people, and in one age make them inapt both in skill and courage for fresh engagements in war. Christians must therefore be always animated with daily resolution and boldness, and kept up to continual exercise, and the highest discipline of their spiritual warfare: not only to be ready against all possible assaults, but because a courage and constancy less than this, cannot bring them to heaven.

And this subject is peculiarly proper for this day dedicated to St. *James the Great*, as he was signally distinguished from the other St. *James*; and likewise so stiled from his great and early courage and resolution in the Christian cause, as also by our Lord with *John* his brother surnamed *Boanerges*, a title that must denote, by its sound and origine, the exertion of the most undaunted boldness in defending and speaking up for its cause. He came in one of the soonest
upon

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upon the call of the *Messias*, and was a proto-martyr of all the Apostles.

Herod the King being willing to gratify the *Jews* with the extremest cruelty, fell first upon him as most active in zeal and eminent for piety, a principal in that new profession, or heresy as they would have it called: so his time was but short after the ascension of his Lord, into whose intimate recesses and even agonies (which had inured him to sufferings) he had on all occasions been admitted; and so we have but slender records of him: one signal one related by so many authors I cannot omit; that his accuser convicted by his courage and constancy, the sincerity and truth of his cause, fell down at his feet and begged his pardon, and so was gladly made a fellow martyr with him. But I find to our present purpose, wherever he is mentioned, martyrdom and suffering for Christ Jesus is more especially discoursed upon and recommended. And we know the institutions of such solemn days of commemoration are to set forth the memorable virtues and acts of those Saints, for our imitation.

Now tho' we cannot by any means recommend those hard times, yet in matter of fact, as to the effects of the soundest and most rewardable Christianity, we cannot pronounce them the most unhappy: and therefore the Apostles upon all occasions, not in mere ecstasy, but sensibly and rationally, did so often set forth the great joy and glory of all manner of sufferings for the cause of Christ. *My brethren, count*

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it all joy, when you fall into divers temptations, says St. James, (i. 2. v. 11.) and we count them happy which endure. And St. Paul (Rom. v. 11.) owns it in the name of all Christians, that *we glory in tribulation*, and confirms the souls of the Disciples in *Asia*, exhorting them *to continue in the faith*, even upon this harsh motive and cold incitement (Acts xiv. 12.) that *we must go through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of God*: with innumerable encouraging expressions of the like import throughout all his *Epistles*, to hearten them on in the encountering and bearing the utmost extremities of suffering, and ever without resistance. And St. Peter incites them by the like motives: *What glory is it, if when you be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God.* And again; *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery tryal, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoyce in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth on you.* And if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.

And to this good Apostle we owe that good rule, and most indispensable precept, which was security to civil authority from the dangers

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of a new religion, and thereby the best preservative of that religion. (1 *Epist.* xiii. 14.) *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.* Nothing can be more exprefs, without exception or reserve, only that natural and necessary one of *obeying God rather than man.* From this quarter, that is, the secular power their greatest sufferings were to come: and had they maintained or put in practice any doctrine of resistance, Christianity in all likelihood would have been crushed in its minority, or thrown out of the world, not by tyrants only but by the best of *Roman Emperors.* And that sovereign power, wherever it is lodged, must be very weak (if there be not a contradiction in the supposition) that shall allow of or countenance any such principle, whereby it divesteth itself of that common right of nature, which is self-preservation. And be assured that no king that shall ever reign over you will ever punish his subjects, for maintaining and putting in practice the true Christian doctrine of non-resistance.

Now these rigid injunctions of suffering without resisting, so readily and universally obeyed and submitted to in matter of fact, by thousands of examples upon record of *confessors* and *martyrs*, cannot but denote to us how vastly difficult the attainment of the kingdom of heaven was in those times, in comparison to what we may be

be apt to think it in ours ; but withal too we cannot but draw these inferences from such a consideration ; That whatever extraordinary testimonies of our zeal and devotion are now required in the same cause, must on all occasions be given ; and that coldness and indifferency, much less that *knavish moderation*, the cloak that has been lately in fashion, cannot be dispensed with : That our Christian Religion is still to be looked upon as our highest interest, and most tender concern ; and That we must hold the profession of it with such fast and tenacious loyalty, that upon peril of losing all its effects, we must not venture upon any compliances or base submissions which shall make its authority or honour little and contemptible, or break in upon its constitution.

So that to come to our own case, the duty is still in force, we have often occasion for it, to *bold fast the profession of our faith*. The Church, tho' recovered from her former state of sufferings and oppressions, is not so much hardened, but still a very tender body, and may be mortally wounded in several parts. As she hath now the favour of the secular power, (which the primitive had not) it will be hard usage, if she should lose by it, and flourish less.

The great *Constantine* will be renowned throughout all ages (whilst Christianity hath a vogue) for taking up her cause, which had been so miserably depressed under so many of his predecessors, proved a true nursing father, retrieved and established all her spiritual rights,

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and cherished her with temporals: guarded the true faith against *Hereticks* and *Heathens*; and settled her articles and doctrines, and whole constitution, by the best authority, viz. a *general council*.

And we have hope, we have good reason, God be thanked, to be assured, that this and all other signal and royal examples of loving Christianity, of defending the faith, and holding fast the profession of it, will to the height of imitation be followed by our most pious and glorious * *Queen*; to whom may we owe that admirable and transcendent safety and security, that our *Church is in no danger*, tho' surrounded with such virulent enemies.

And now we are out of the frights of popery, it is highly reasonable and just, that that Church, which most resolutely and almost alone bore up against all its invasions, should now be more especially countenanced and taken into particular sovereign care and protection.

In a regular government we never heard of any in civil or military offices, who were brought to a tryal for defending their posts not only with success, but also punctually to the word of command, according to the express injunctions they had received, or according to the rules and laws of their office. And why must our Church ever and anon be brought upon examination, and under correction (as some desire to see) upon pretended deficiencies and redundancies? which hath so successfully defended her whole

* Preached in *Queen Anne's* Reign.

whole frame and constitution against her adversaries on all sides?

Which of her doctrines can be arraigned and found delinquent? and her discipline would be as irreproveable, would but civil authority say the word, and reach forth its arm upon all just and even but necessary occasions to back her spiritual jurisdiction, and strike terroure to such enemies and offenders that fear no penalties or punishments but what are present and temporal.

In the Apostles times, and for some time after, there was a miraculous power annexed to that of the keys, of inflicting bodily punishments and diseases upon obstinate and scandalous offenders and gainsayers, either in doctrine or practice; for the continuance of which miracle there was no occasion, when the civil power had embraced the Christian faith. But then the Church must fail in her expectations, and in the designment of heaven, if a Christian government will not become her guardian, and stand by her in scourging her offending members with such penalties as were inflicted before, at the expence of a miracle, at a time when the magistrate would not engage in her cause, but was her worst enemy and persecutor.

But to go on: Our whole constitution both in worship and discipline hath in every point been rationally and unanswerably defended, by holy and learned writers: we have no cause to throw up their reasons and arguments (of great weight and such as will hold) for the sake of

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them that will never be persuaded by any.

These learned books are, as it were, the standing records and evidences of our church; and we do little less than commit them to the flames, if we give up the cause so irrefragably defended in them: and be sure as the case now stands, by changing, and altering, and expunging, shall bring fewer into our communion, than may in time be convinced by those strenuous reasonings. For the obstinacy of some parties is full well known to be proof against all moderate invitations and concessions, as much as against sound reason and argument.

Stability is both the honour and safety of a Church; and there must be absolute necessity, as well as some few plausible objections, to put us upon alterations, to gratify those whose satisfactions are boundless, or upon unsociable comprehensions, which like some companies or pretended societies would be ever jarring together or betraying one another.

Our adversaries of *Rome* would be glad to catch us at this modelling work, and we should give them fresh hopes (tho' at present their cause seems desperate) of coming again amongst us, and making a better advantage than ever of our instability, added to the divisions and separations that they themselves have in some instances raised, and ever fomented among the *Sectaries*. Let us stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage,
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Gal. v. 1. Let us then *hold fast our profession* in this relation, as it stands established in the *Church of England*, founded upon the scriptures, and descendent from the primitive Catholick Church: let us stand upon her antiquity, and not own her as of a late and desultory origine, or a mere *Leviathan* mechanism that may be taken to pieces or destroy'd at pleasure.

If we play fast and loose with our profession, we shall be in danger of losing it quite. *He that wavereth*, saith St. James, (i. 6, 8.) *is like a wave of the sea*: rises and rages with a boisterous zeal, like foaming billows, and presently falls into calm and mean condescensions; as that tosses the ship with wind and weather, and then of a sudden it is so be-calmed that it cannot make sail to its port, and may chance to fall into the enemies hands: *a double minded man*, saith the same Apostle (Oh! let not *our Church-men* be like him) *is unstable in all his ways*.

Compliance in lesser matters would be a duty, and absolutely obliging, were not the success so doubtful one way, and the danger so eminent of greater defection, another. Therefore we have as yet no reasons or motives to suffer one jot or tittle of our most holy profession to pass from us: and in this case more highly than in any worldly trust, *He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much*; and *he that is unjust in the least, will be unjust also in much*, Luke xvi. 10.

But above all (to pass over many things that may be said on this subject) let the whole frame

be strengthened by the holy and exemplary lives of all the members of this holy profession and communion. Then will God assuredly be on our side, and vindicate our cause on all hands, when our lives are as defensible as our doctrines; when we walk as *holy Church-men*, which is the substantial, and indeed only testimony and confirmation, that we are *true Church-men*: then *high church* (which is cast forth as a name of reproach) will throw the shame upon all the *low* and *degenerate* professors, who value themselves as the best subjects, for having an indifferency or little regard to the Church of God, and, as the best Christians, for allowing themselves to be moderate in its defence. For we must not forget, that *holding fast our profession* must always include our living up to our profession in all *holiness of conversation*.

Creeds, and *Liturgies*, and *Sacraments*, and *Church-Communion*, are all but external badges, and the mere formalities of piety and devotion, if the professors of Christianity do not hold by this title and claim that they also *live up to* the faith and precepts of the Gospel. What is it to say, 'I will not be of this religion, or of this opinion, and persuasion, so absurd and so contrary to all sense and reason, that maintains such gross and monstrous tenets, and worships with so many ridiculous ceremonies, if I am in life and conversation of no religion at all?'

Let reason and Scripture-authority lie where it will, the holy life carries away the prize. Many of the controversies of religion are really
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but verbal, and surely of less moment on the wrong side, than wickedness in practice on the right : however they will be decided at the last great day, or whether worth the while they should be decided at all ; no mistake will prove so damnable as a dissolute conversation.

Nay, it is hard to say, what or how many errors in judgment we may be faulty in, or how many truths we may be doubtful of, so that our opinions be not taken up with wilful prejudice, and maintained with obstinacy and ill-nature, rather than be vitiated through the whole course of our lives. For tho' a mistake in the understanding by credulity or incredulity be usually more incorrigible, yet cannot be so liable to damnation as the immoral acts and vitious effects and products of the will.

Therefore, till we are clean ourselves, and live up to our true profession, we upbraid ourselves in despising and reviling others whom we rightly judge to be out of the way as to matters of faith, or as to the *communion* or *party* they are of. The truest *profession* as to doctrine and worship cannot give a badge of innocence. Vitious livers on all sides, will all be thrown one way, and are really members of *no church* of Christ, but a party by themselves: and in the next world, there will be little distinction in their punishments; besure no favour shewn for having been professors in the truest church, but in justice rather an aggravation of torment as well as guilt, upon all that have lived impure lives in the purest communion.

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We shall lose all then, if we let go this hold; shall bring reproach and scandal on our most holy religion in this world, forfeit all its effects in the next, and after all our professings have our portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. *For we have professed to know God, but in works we have denied him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.* But our Lord will be more plain with us, and profess a greater truth, as he once threatened those who made as high pretences of intimate knowledge and acquaintance: *Then will I profess to them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.* (Tit. i. 16. Matt. vii. 23.)

Now all that hath been already said as to each point of *holding fast our profession* will easily infer the necessity of the duty; which in the second place is

II. The absolute and indispensable obligation of *holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* We have more arguments to prove this obligation upon ourselves, infinitely more we may say, as eternity infinitely exceeds the short time of our abiding here upon earth, than we have to prove it necessary to provide for present life and subsistence, for our families and posterity, to stand up for our properties and possessions, for defence of our lives and good names, and all that is naturally dear to us in this world; upon this one consideration, obvious to every man at first thought, that our eternal life and well being depends upon it. For Christian religion, is in

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one word, the means and way that God hath ordained how we shall come to him, by faith and a good life ; how man may get into his favour again, and enjoy it for ever. It is a *covenant of grace*, a doctrine and method of reconciliation, founded upon the merits of an all-sufficient Saviour, the Son of God most high, by which we have leave, nay, a certain right, (because he has deserv'd it for us) to come in for the pardon of our sins, and also for an *everlasting inheritance*.

This is the method of the Apostle's arguing in this chapter before us ; from the all-sufficiency and necessity of that one sacrifice, by the Blood of Christ, God and man, in place of those many that were but legal and insufficient, and from the nature of the *covenant*, which I will make with them, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them ; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (Heb. x. 16, 17.) All the reason in the world, upon these persuasives, that we should hold fast the profession of our faith : as he had argued before, upon the most inviting incitements, *Chap.* the 4th of this *Epistle*, and concludes with the encouragement and obligation joined together : *Seeing then that we have a great high-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession : and let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need.*

There is no occasion to enlarge farther upon this

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this point, the case is so plain. If these be our religious properties, and the glorious liberties of the *sons* of God; it would be as great absurdity and madness, to deliberate, whether we had best be eternally miserable, or choose eternal happiness, as to be irresolute, or undetermined, whether we should *hold fast* the profession of our faith, or *let it go*.

Who would part with one article of such an advantageous covenant betwixt God and ourselves; since every article of this agreement, was particularly framed for our especial deliverance and advancement? no real accession of honour to God, or his Son, who shone before with infinite brightness and glory from all eternity. Who would venture upon the wilful breach of one precept or injunction, contained in this covenant of grace, lest it should make null the whole, and throw us back into the *state of sin and damnation*?

For the highest displeasure and indignation upon such provocations, will, in course, succeed the highest love and condescensions; and if our Lord hath entered into a covenant of grace and favour with us, we must stand to the conditions; else, instead of a Saviour, he must in necessary consequence, prove no less than a destroyer.

We have a hard saying from the author of this *Epistle*, yet we cannot but own it is just and equitable, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. That *it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers*
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of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. Whether these words relate to the usual apostacy of some in those times, in denying the faith under persecution; or the general renunciation of baptismal engagements, by falling back to a wicked and dissolute life, according to the *Novatian* rigours, is not material to decide: both senses are to our purpose, so far as upon just and reasonable apprehensions, to cast us into the greatest dread and trembling, lest in any one point, we should fail in *holding fast* the profession of our faith.

III. I am now to conclude with the *encouragements* to the resolute performance of this duty: *For he is faithful that promised.*

Our encouragements must be grounded upon the evidence of our profession; if that be true, and from God, which is not now to be proved, but will surely be taken as granted, by those that are professors of the Christian faith; then everlasting glory will be the sure reward of all those, who in all relations, *hold fast* that profession: and their losses and sufferings, or inconveniencies they meet with, by *holding fast* that profession, will be very inconsiderable, and not worth naming; because, tho' never so hard and severe, yet are all comprehended within the narrow compass of this mortal life. If we have

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have assurance of a state of blifs in the next, which is everlasting, and is the certain reward of true *sound professors* of Christianity, it is then no less than demonstration, that *the sufferings of this present time cannot be worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.* For which, saith St. Paul, (2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18.) *we faint not, but tho' our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal.* So that, to suppose even those hardest times we first instanced in, we have the less reason still to be disheartened, being then sooner dispatched into immortal blifs and glory: for courage in a true religion, which is the cause of God, and hath the glorious promises of the next world, and an almighty Saviour for the insurance, is a resolution so well grounded, that one would think that all Christians must necessarily be ever possessed with it, as the very consequent of their profession: and baseness and cowardness in so noble a concern and engagement, must argue such unaccountable degeneracy of soul, that is not to be match'd in any combats of our humane passions. What! to give up, and yield, when the weapons of our warfare (that is, our graces and virtues) cannot, by all the mighty powers upon earth, be
wrested

wrested out of our hands, nor the prize, tho' we be torn into a thousand pieces, be rended from us?

For the ends of courage are here both ways obtain'd, and we are sure of the victory, tho' we fall in the combat. The primitive sufferers, with St. *James the Great* at the head of them, by standing their ground, and *holding fast* their profession, either as *confessors* maintained their point, and bore up the cross in spite of all the power and malice of their enemies; or else, if they fell under the persecution, they became more than conquerors, and were presently instated in the martyrs crown. The very fatal blow gives the reward, and the happy sufferer, by the promise of him that is *faithful*, of eternal and never-failing veracity, is insured of bliss as soon as shut out of the world, by the enemies of true religion.

Nay, the faith itself that we profess, if sound, will do its own work; therefore is such Almighty power attributed to it, that *nothing shall be impossible to him that believeth*: he will conquer all before him: this is the *victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*; for *who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God*, says St. *John* (1 Epist. v. 4, 5.) It is in the original of that Text, τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς Ἐλπίδος, the profession of our *hope*, which is the effect for the cause: for a sound faith will give us such a comfortable hope, such a clear prospect of happiness from the promises of the Gospel, and the merits of a Saviour, that

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that nothing shall be able to hinder us in running *the race that is set before us*. Our profession is provided with such powerful assistances from the gifts and graces it bestows, and the virtues it enjoins, that it may bid defiance to the world to cross its designs, or prevent its triumphs.

It is not purely a metaphorical strain, but a necessary fence and guard which will endure proof, when St. Paul, *Eph. vi. 12.* arms out his fighting Christian *against flesh and blood, against principalities and powers, and all the rulers of darkness of this world*: wherefore, *take unto you, the whole armour of God, that ye might be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. And above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked: and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with perseverance.* It will be tedious to comment upon this whole armory, but to range them together, *truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation, the word of the spirit, prayer, and watching,* must necessarily make up an invincible force, against all the evils and oppositions we can meet with from the enemies of our souls and salvation, and enable us to fight our way *through a wilderness to our heavenly Canaan.*

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But after all our triumphs we must not forget that this is a spiritual warfare. In Christian contests all must be sedate and quiet, let *there be neither wars, nor rumours of wars*. Meekness and humility, universal love and charity, will prove our strongest fence and most killing weapons, that will do the surest and even peaceable execution: If the *weapons* of our *warfare* be not *carnal*, they will be mighty *through God, to the pulling down of strong holds*.

The victories of the primitive sufferers, as you have heard already, were real and glorious, tho' they fell in fight, by the over-powering rage of their adversaries; and it is as really true, tho' not consistent with the warlike commotions of this world, that a peaceable spirit and the love of our enemies will give them the greatest blow, and ourselves the surest conquest. It is therefore a part of the *whole armour of God* which must not be missing, that our *feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*; that so we may walk in peace and meekness to those that are without, with true Christian moderation towards all men. Nay, the same Apostle else-where makes it a *Πανοπλία* a *complete armour* by itself. (Col. iii. 12. &c.) *Put on therefore (as the elect of God holy and beloved) bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another; if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye: And above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfection, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts.*

If we have any violence to exert, let us em-

ploy it at home, our worst foes (such as lack down-right fighting with) are those of our own household. Here we must break the peace, mortify and subdue our unruly passions and inordinate desires, and *crucify the flesh* with the affections and lusts. Our profession of religion will be brought under slavery, and made to serve unto only carnal and worldly ends, *if we suffer sin to reign in our mortal bodies, to obey the lusts thereof*. Here we must erect our chiefest trophies for the honour of our profession. He is a man of the truest valour and bravery that can conquer and govern himself, and will prove the most resolute and soundest professor of Christianity: *flesh and blood*, however they may carry it in this world, *cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven*; (that is, in their natural impurities and predominant corruptions, without this correction and amendment before death) *and the grace of God that bringeth salvation, and hath appeared unto all men teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly righteously and godly in this present world, look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*.

And now grant, O Lord, we may put in practice what we daily pray for; "That all who
 " profess and call themselves Christians may be
 " led into the way of truth, and hold the faith
 " in all unity of Spirit, in the bond of peace,
 " and in righteousness of life, which we beg
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“for Jesus Christ his sake,” To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God and three Persons, be ascribed, Almighty power and Adoration now and for ever more. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXI.

Of Godly Fear and Obedience.

ECCLES. XII. 13.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

THE royal preacher in these words seems to correct himself, in what he had talk'd so largely upon before, concerning the vanity of the creature and the insufficiency of all things, besides religion and virtue, to denominate a *wiseman*; or to do the business, for which we were sent into the world. As tho' his long Sermon might all this while seem little better than an impertinent harangue, when all might have been delivered in two words: *Fear God and keep his commandments*; this *the conclusion of the whole matter*; this *is the whole duty of man.*

And should we preach from one Lord's day

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to another; out of season (as some love best to do) as well as in season, which is our duty, and enlarge upon variety of subjects; we make but extravagant excursions, whilst we wander from this point. The preacher may seek to find out acceptable truths, as our king of preachers here observes, *ver. 10.* that is, *words of delight*, as you see it in the margin: and so *ver. 12.* he says *of making many books there is no end, and much study is weariness of the flesh*: when in truth all the ends of preaching and studying, of labouring in the word and doctrine must fall under his common imputation and charge of vanity, if not concentrating in this great fundamental or indeed complex of all morality and religion, of *fearing God, and keeping his commandments*. And if we could at once speaking strike a full impression of this obligation into the hearts of men, they would have preaching and task enough for their whole lives, for *this is the conclusion of the whole matter*, this is the *whole duty of man*.

There are little arts but very mean ones, that are practiced to charm and keep up a mistaken devotion: But in truth it is but a kind of devout wantonness, to require more than this before us; a sort of pride and luxury, that cannot be very well justified in religion; *viz.* that divinity must be modelled into various shapes and fashions, and beholden to voice and noise, to aspect and grimace and gesture (which in common conversation are often thought very nauseous and antick) for its beauty and graces; and all to gratify the curiosity of two wanton senses, the gazing

gazing eye and the itching ear; or to please a luxuriant appetite of the spirit, that is so like that of the flesh, which must have its set meals, with all superfluous varieties.

But he that hath been well fed with this single word of truth, or in the language of the context hath been fully instructed in these *acceptable words*, or *words of delight*, shall be fulfilled with all *righteousness*, and shall have sufficient employment all the days of his life, both to gratify and exercise his understanding and will, his passions and affections, all the faculties and inclinations both of his soul and body in the wisest and most gainful end of human life, which is to *fear God, and keep his commandments*.

Without any nicer division of the words, into their distinct kinds, we will take them in their several parts just as they lye before us. As

I. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; which is,

II. To fear God: And

III. To keep his commandments: And

IV. That this is the whole duty of man.

I. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. When we have ransack'd the whole world, for profit, pleasure, riches and honours, and attain'd them and all things else our hearts can desire in successive enjoyments, we shall be sure, if we ever come to be truly wise and make

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reflections, to pass our Royal Preacher's sentence upon them, that they are altogether *vanity and vexation of spirit*; that tho' they even cloy the appetites, yet they fill not the mind, nor give rest to the soul; nay, if we employ all that time and labour in the more noble acquisition of wisdom itself, *Solomon* pronounces no better upon it, tho' it was his own highest, and most desir'd accomplishment †. For in this his *Ecclasiastes* or *recantation Sermon*, when he began to think over again, he seems to retract his former sentiments, and as of all things else, so to be quite out of love with his admired wisdom *. *And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly* (all alike it seems at last to him) *I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit, For in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.*

This may be a just and true satyr upon all the wisdom and learning of the world, the object of curiosity, and the subject of the most laborious search and enquiry: and will sometimes fall right enough even upon that wisdom, which by philosophers hath been ever thought the completion of all knowledge; *to know ourselves*; for even here we may make such lamentable discoveries, that the result must prove the greatest sorrow and *vexation of spirit*. But by no means must we allow divine wisdom to deserve that censure: that wisdom and truest philosophy which makes right inferences, and draws the most demonstrative conclusions from those premises; as, that we are God's creatures, and sent into the world to do

† 1 Kings iv. 30. x. 23.

* Eccl. i. 17, 18.

do his service, therefore must employ the best and most of our time in his *fear* and *love*, and to his glory, in obedience and devotion to our almighty Creator; or otherwise must fall under his everlasting displeasure. For according to all the rules of truest wisdom and soundest reasoning without exception, this must be the *conclusion of the whole matter*, to *fear God and keep his commandments*. Of this wisdom our Preacher elsewhere gives the highest encomiums, in words that bear the same impresson of the Holy Spirit, with those I now quoted in dispraise of the former. *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding*, or as in the original, the man that *draweth out* understanding *i. e.* by the fore-mentioned way of arguing and concluding. *She is more precious than all the rich merchandise of gold and jewels that can be desir'd. Her ways too are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*. Nothing like *sorrow* or *vexation of spirit* to annoy her; for *she is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her*. Under various great characters and advantages doth he recommend this wisdom to his son, as the noblest acquisition, as you may read in his three or four first chapters of his book of *Proverbs*; by which he must mean the wisdom of *religious practice*; that which concludes a man to be wise beyond all imputation of vanity; because it is employ'd upon the great or sole end of our lives, the *fear of God and the keeping his commandments*. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore *get wisdom, and above all thy getting,*

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get understanding : It puts us out of the reach of all sorrow and vexation, because no satisfaction is so clear and inviolable as doing our proper business, and making progress in it with daily improvement and success.

Keep sound wisdom and discretion, says our wise-man, *let them not depart from thine eyes*, so shall *they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck* : Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble : When thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid, yea thou shalt lie down and thy sleep shall be sweet ; and this we cannot but allow to be one happy conclusion of the whole matter. Beyond all possible objection, this must be acknowledged to be the truest wisdom, because it pursues the noblest and securest ends : Present contentment (which is the highest attainment in this life) it hath in possession, and the fairest prospect of everlasting felicity and the highest glory.

That man we ever pronounce to be the wisest, whose knowledge is most useful, and is directed by the most proper means to the best and most gainful end : And the great end of our immortal beings, is, by reason and the greater help of revelation, to provide for eternity : And the means lie before us here, *to fear God and keep his commandments*.

Now if we leave this whole matter to the conclusion of our days, and make it our last work, we invert all the rules and maxims of true wisdom and prudence, that we commonly move by in any concern of the world. Shall it take up the most and best of our time, to attain to

a science

a science or get an estate; and an everlasting provision be made time enough, when that is spent and our strength is wasted or worn out?

Let us seriously consider upon this *conclusion of the whole matter*: Had we not better do that first, which we shall be sure to like best at last, and we can judge best? if we have but one spare hour to think, when we lie on our death-beds, This will be the *unum necessarium*; oh! that we had but thought on this conclusive point. We shall find ourselves then in an horrible maze, and most strangely bewildred, That every thing hath been done but our proper business: A startling consideration! that must unavoidably cast us into despair; and after death that very thought must haunt our souls to all eternity, (for we do not separate thought from the soul) it will turn into that worm that never dieth. We need not be solicitous in our enquiries, to make up a local hell and material torments, a lake of fire and brimstone, and everlasting burnings, to comport with Scripture descriptions; let the soul fly where it will, so long as it carries about it this thought, which is never to be shook off, *viz.* That in a wilful mistake, quite beside the end of our creation, we have through the whole course of our lives unluckily *done that which we ought not to have done*, and quite *left undone that which we ought to have done*, and thereby are for ever deprived of the vision of God, and therein all that is happy. It must be surely rack and torture enough, to a rational think-

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thinking reflecting soul, without the horrible discipline of *Abbadon*, and *the angel of the bottomless pit*; to be chain'd in darkness and blackness for ever, would be a degree of bliss and retirement, in comparison of that enlargement of thought and horror, contemplating on that glorious light and happiness that we are for ever shut off from, by an unpassable gulf; and all our own fault and folly, in brutishly mistaking not only the true end, but also the truest pleasure and satisfactions of our late moral life.

Let us think then while we have time before us, to follow the advice upon what is the *conclusion of the whole matter*, which is *to fear God and keep his commandments*. And so I come in the second place to

II. The first part of our *duty*; *viz.* that previous disposition of soul: *The fear of God*, by which we shall be incited *to keep his commandments*.

Fear God; This is a large subject; but we must be short upon it, the very Text intimates as much: The Preacher tells us in a single verse, what is the whole business of our lives, and therein gives us the compendium of all natural and revealed religion. *Moses* before him reduces it to as narrow a compass, *Deut. vi. 13. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him*, and so *Deut. x. 12. And now Israel what doth the Lord our God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, and to walk in all his ways*. So these two great Princes, Father and Son, do both declare that the *fear of the Lord*, is the

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beginning of wisdom; that is to say, an entrance into that wise course of life, which is exercised upon the best and most advantageous employment, which is religion. In a word, all holiness of life is expressed in this one passion, the *fear of God*; and so negatively, *Prov. viii. 13. The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil*. For the fear of God is that strong and prevailing passion of the soul, arising from a belief or knowledge of the deity, who can everlastingly reward and punish; by which we are naturally incited to do what is agreeable to his will, and as naturally aw'd and restrain'd from that which is displeasing in his sight: And when we do not one, or do not abstain from the other, we are said to live *without the fear of God*, or to be *without God in the world*, that is, void of all religion.

It was *Job's* high character, that *he was a perfect and upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil*: And he became that perfect and upright man and eschewed evil, because he truly feared the Lord. And the true character of wisdom he gives us from the mouth of God himself, which was this (*chap. xxviii. ver. 28.*) *And unto man he said (i. e. the Lord said it) Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*

And so *Cornelius the Centurion*, is said to *fear God*, and upon that he became a *devout man*, and *gave much alms and prayed always*; and had the honour of particular vision, and tho' an heathen, yet by this disposition of mind was fitted for the kingdom of Christ, and was by

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by the Angel directed to St. *Peter* for farther instruction and baptism.

So that *fear*, tho' we do not allow it to make gods, as the atheistical Poet * would suggest, is the prime great motive in religious worship: And tho' itself but a passion, and so ought always to be under the government of the reason and understanding; yet doth it seem mightily to govern in all human actions, as well as those that relate to religion. We are diligent and punctual in the use of all those means, that are necessary to an advantageous end, because we fear the unhappy effects of a miscarriage or contrary accident. So that *fear* on all accounts is the *beginning of wisdom*, that is, of circumspection or looking about us in all our worldly affairs; and the *fear of God* is the *beginning of that divine wisdom*, that truest knowledge, by which we most carefully look about us in the main or everlasting concern of life and death.

Now we must take care, that this fear must be filial and reverential, towards a God surrounded with such attributes of infinite wisdom and perfection, as are most amiable and adorable, and who hath manifested himself in all the most obliging ways (even in his very severities) to mankind; and yet without the imputation of a servile or slavish fear. We may be allowed in the practice of so much self-interest, as to have an eye to the *recompence of reward*, and also a dread of those endless torments, which must be our portion, if we do not

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* *Primus in orbe Deos fecit Timor.*

continue to *fear him, and keep his commandments.*

Now the motives to this fear not only relate to the power and justice of God, but also to his goodness and mercy : As we may justly dread the terrour of the former, so surely we cannot but fear and tremble, lest we should fall short of the latter.

1. Then, we ought always to have before our eyes the dread majesty and power of God ; who by all manner of rights hath an absolute dominion over us ; and we have not so much as a privilege or property, but what flows from his prerogative, from his justice and wisdom, and power and goodness ; life, motion, and being, are no claim, but of his pure good will. *If I be your master* (which surely is his lowest title) *where is my fear ?* saith the Lord of hosts. *Mal. i. 6.* Every instance of his power may cast us into trembling, and into a sense of our own most abject weakness. *Fear ye not me, saith the Lord ? Will ye not tremble at my presence ? which have placed the sand for a bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass, Jer. v. 22.* A remote consideration and one amongst a million, or indeed an infinity ; but ground enough for fear and trembling. What God hath done, and what we see done every day, the mighty wonders of his creation and providence ; the daily objects of our senses, as they are standing proofs of a deity, so are sufficient incitements to fear and tremble at the apprehension of the almighty Creator and wise Governour of the universe. Nay, if we look not beyond that little world of ourselves, we cannot contemplate without fear : *I will praise thee,* saith holy *David, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made ; marvellous are thy works, and that*

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that my soul knoweth right well, Pſal. cxxxix. 14.

2. The great manifeſtation of his power and juſtice, in puniſhing wicked men, may well keep up our fear and dread of that infinite majeſty: Examples of which are innumerable upon record, in all common hiſtories, as well as ſacred; and many ſignal ones within the compaſs of our own obſervation. So God ordered the declaration to be made to *Pharaoh*, *Exod. ix. 16.* *For this cauſe have I raiſed thee up, for to ſhew in thee my power, and that my name in thee may be declared, throughout the earth:* not made him wicked, as ſome blaſphemouſly infer, and draw other worſe conſequences too; but being wicked of himſelf, and obſtinately continuing ſo, made him an example. So *Moses*, on the ſame ſubject, in his ſong of praiſe, expreſſes himſelf, *Exod. xv. 14, 15.* *The people ſhall hear and be afraid, ſorrow ſhall take hold on the inhabitants of Paleſtina; then the dukes of Edom ſhall be amazed, the mighty men of Moab, trembling ſhall take hold upon them: All the inhabitants of Canaan ſhall melt away.*

The *Heathen*, who were but a law unto themſelves, were ever ſeverely and ſignally puniſhed, when the meaſure of their iniquities was fulfilled, when they had been long provoking offenders againſt that law of nature. And the *Jews* the very people of God, had their turns too, and were not more ſignally ſo for his favours, than for the numerous, grievous, and moſt heavy afflictions and puniſhments he had laid upon them: And after their many and incorrigible provocations, their temple, city, and government,

were

were quite destroyed, and they have been a discarded nation for above 1600 years : a standing argument the for Christian religion, whose first enemies have so long continued the objects of divine vengeance : and a standing example to all nations, what in time shall be the fate of all those that set themselves against *Christ's* holy Church, and *obey not the gospel of God*. How can we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ? so the Apostle to the *Hebrews* infers from former judgments, that, that method of God's proceedings is not taken off. *Heb. xii. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear ; for our God is a consuming fire*. There are punishments, that are more especially for example to the standers-by, and destructive to the sinful sufferers : Upon that sad judgment that befell *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, it is said, *Act. v. 11. Great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things*.

There are other sufferings and punishments that have kindness in the intent of them, called *afflictions* and *chastisements* upon us, to awaken us seasonably into a sense of our sins, and a dread of God's final wrath and displeasure ; which are to be look'd upon as gentle commutations for everlasting torments, due to sin against an infinite Majesty ; and that we always keep up lively apprehensions of that great and terrible day of judgment ; the same dread arguments St. Paul makes use of for perswasion, *2 Cor. v. 11.*

Knowing

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Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we perswade men. And the affrighting motive we have in the ver. before : *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* And our Preacher, in the close of his discourse, thought it enough to add but this one motive to his *fear of God*, and *keeping his commandments* : *For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* We need name no more ; did but we truly believe this judgment to come, surely it would be impossible for us, to run the venture of an ungodly life, or not to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling.* But,

3. So various are our motives and incitements to fear, that they arise too from the very mercies of God. *The Lord is merciful and to be feared.* The Psalmist often acknowledgeth : *Even to thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, Psal. lxii. 12.* and the instance given may cast us into *trembling* ; *for thou renderest to every man according to his work.* Even the most common mercies of his providence, without which we are apt to think ourselves undone, are proper occasions to raise us into this *fear* : Let us now *fear the Lord God that giveth rain, both the former and the latter rain in his season, Jer. v. 24.* That unseasonable, or a drought, are evils we fear, and call judgments, when they befall us ; we have reason to fear then under the enjoyments of the most common blessings. All belonging to this life are ensured upon this qualification, of continuing in the *fear*

of

of God : *What man is he that feareth * the Lord ? his soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall inherit the earth. O fear the Lord, all ye his Saints ; for there is no want to them that fear him. And so our wisest of all kings † and preachers ; The fear of the Lord prolongeth days ; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.* All these are very valuable blessings in our own esteem ; dare we live a day *without* the fear of God, lest he should in his just displeasure bar them from us, or despoil us of them ?

What a doleful complaint is that of king *David*, (*Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9.*) *Will the Lord cast us off for ever, and will he be favourable no more ? Is his mercy cleangone for ever ? doth his promise fail for evermore ? Hath God forgotten to be gracious ? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies ?*

But now much more tremendous is the consideration of his mercy in pardoning sin. There is *forgiveness with thee*, saith holy *David* again, *that thou mayest be feared*, *Psal. cxxx. 4.* Forgiving of sins ! that is God's high prerogative, and to us the most transcendent of all his blessings ; especially as confirmed to us in that mercy of all mercies, Christ Jesus the Saviour of the world : A mercy, most comforting and solacing in the contemplation ! as that the main of our business is done for us, and a satisfaction already made for our sins, and we may with boldness come unto the throne of God's grace and mercy to take out our pardons : but on the other hand, very dreadful to think upon, on a just sus-

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X

picion

* *Psal. xxv. 12, 13, xxxiv. 9.* † *Prov. x. 27.*

petition; What if we should have no share at all in this covenant of pardon and forgiveness? as having not truly and faithfully (notwithstanding all our solemn professions) submitted to the conditions of fear and obedience? Or what if we should not persevere in those conditional duties to the end of our lives? The case is every way hazardous.

In a word, this single thought must every day cast us into a fit of fear and trembling; What if we should not be saved? And the passage is straight and difficult, and the miscarriage easy and most frequent. Hear the doleful description of such misery from the prophet *Isaias* chap. xxxiii. ver. 14. *The sinners in Sion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?*

Let us therefore (as we justly may) fear, lest a promise being left us of *entering into his rest*, any of us should seem to come short of it, according to the Apostle's motive, *Heb. iv. 1.* Thus far of the preparative disposition to religious practice, *the Fear of God*. One would think in the

III. Third place, *Keeping the commandments of God* would naturally fall in, upon common principles of self-preservation: for if we fear him whom we believe (and we should not fear if we did not believe) to be the sovereign and absolute disposer of all that is desirable and happy in this life, and that which is to come; the very *gain of godliness* must certainly incite

us to all manner of obedience. We are miserable here, if his common providence and protection be suspended; and eternally miserable, if we die under his final displeasure, if not reconciled by the blood of Christ and our own repentance.

Do we truly fear all this? How stupid and brutish is it (not to be match'd among the beasts that have no understanding) not to secure ourselves against the sin and danger that doth so easily be set us?

Now if in every particular precept, I should undertake to tell you, what it is to keep the commandments of God, I must run through all the duties of a moral and Christian man; but I must again repeat it, the Text warns us to be short; the wisest preacher having here expressed himself so fully in so narrow a compass. What is there more can be expected, that is not contained in the Text? *The Lord hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, saith the Prophet Micah, chap. vi. ver. 8. and that very short and plain, and what doth he require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* And St. Paul, in as few words, makes an entire purgation of himself against all accusations, either of immorality or irreligion, *Acts, xxiv. 16. And herein do I exercise my self, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man.* The common division then will serve best for my Text: *Keep his commandments*, that is, observe all duties toward God and towards our neighbour, which is the whole law of righteousness. *On these two commandments*, saith our

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Saviour, *hang all the law and the Prophets*, (Mat. xxii. 40.) the first whereof was (ver. 37.) *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.* Now *this love* is easily conjoin'd with our *fear*, for the reasons already mentioned: Those attributes of infinite excellency and perfection, and likewise those dispensations of mercy and goodness, which I have already proved do excite our fear and reverence, must certainly raise us to as high a degree of love, even to that *perfect love* that *casteth* out all servile or slavish fear.

But our own experience will cast an objection in our way: It is indeed but one commandment, but it is a very difficult one; let us examine the matter: Is this passion of love carried with the same strength and vehemency, according to the strictness of the commandment, towards God as to some other worldly objects? If the commandment did run towards the world, to love *that* with all our hearts, with all our strength, and with all our minds, the obedience would be more ready, easy and general. St. John (Ep. iv. 20.) makes a supposition in an object of love, that is usually not so dear to us, as is the world; and yet concludes, if we cannot love that, we are in no likelihood of loving God: If *a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?* As tho' a friend or companion were naturally a more proper and adequate object of this passion, than

than a being that is incomprehensible. And it is too notorious that there are many things and persons in the world which we love with a greater ardency of affection, than either God or his religion. The obligation then can extend no farther than a natural possibility: and our love will be accepted, when it is attended with the utmost endeavour to love him more and more, and with exceeding grief and sorrow, that our affections can soar no higher toward such an admirable and adorable object; and continually praying, that God would make a nearer discovery of himself to us, by enlightening our understandings, and giving his Holy Spirit to us; and then our love will daily encrease, and rise up to higher raptures. In the mean time, as sound and substantial testimonies of love are in all cases valued beyond all outward professions of kindness and friendship, so on all occasions we must not fail of shewing an actual preference of the honour and worship of God to all objects, either of our love or esteem here below. And this lies within our power, how strong soever the tendency of our nature may be carried another way. The precept of sacrifices, *the best of the flock*, not *lame* or *imperfect*, imply'd this moral meaning, that we should give unto God the *prime* and *choicest* of our services, the most and best of our time, and always the devotion of the heart. All slackness and partiality in obedience, or partiality towards our sins, all flighting behaviour, or not thinking of him, when we pray, or are exercised in any religious duties: All disregard

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or disrespect to his worship or service, or to the mysteries of his holy word, or to whatsoever bears any sacred relation to his name or honour, are certain tokens of not loving him at all: If we were true lovers, it is impossible we should deal so with him. So likewise all hypocrisy and dissimulation (tho' here the pretences of love run always highest) is the worst enmity, (as it is to men when found out) to an all-seeing God, who *searcheth the heart* and *tryeth the reins*, and most certainly discerns his real from pretended friends and lovers. Thus actual and sincere obedience is the best testimony we are able to give, that we *love the Lord our God with all our heart*, and this is the *first commandment*; and the *second*, saith our Lord and law-giver, is *like to it*; *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self*: This too is a hard saying, and almost impossible to flesh and blood; that the passion of love should be carried with an equal hand betwixt our neighbours and ourselves. A true friend is a very near relation, and 'tis pity any selfish distinction should intervene to put him at the least distance: But such a love and friendship which seldom (as moralists tell us) passes in the height betwixt more than two, cannot be extended to all our neighbours in common: therefore this law too, of loving our neighbours as ourselves, must be expounded with some allowance, by those rules that are within our power to observe; as *doing unto them, as we would they should do unto us*, on all occasions doing them good offices, and at all times abstaining from injuries. And thus a man may be as just to

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another as to himself; and it is but common morality, which, in plainer *English*, is good manners, in cases of right and wrong to make an equal dividend betwixt his neighbour and himself; so likewise is it humanity and generosity, very commendable and honourable qualities, to do acts of charity and munificence to our neighbours, not to injure or oppress them, tho' in our power, or we may do it with impunity: And much greater and more illustrious will these actions be when exercised towards our adversaries.

Thus as our love to God must be manifested by the highest tokens of sincere honour and obedience to him, tho' the passion be at a lower ebb; so likewise shall we give better proof of our love to our neighbours, even to the height of this law, by substantial acts of kindness and good offices towards them, than by all the professions of affection and endearments that we can possibly make: And then the ardency of love, which is never failing towards ourselves, will be dispensed with towards them. And this in both relations is that *love*, which is the *fulfilling of the law*; and so consequently gives the most assured testimony that *we fear God, and keep his commandments*; and this is declared in the last words of the Text to be,

IV. *The whole duty of man.* In all revelation that ever was made from heaven, God and Christ Jesus, and the Holy Ghost, have ever had the chiefest respect to virtue and holiness. Whatsoever is written in the whole book of God, all the positive laws for his *worship*, and

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for the establishment of his Church; they are all but as 'twere attendant precepts, that stand round about, to promote it and raise it to the highest obligation, of *fearing God and keeping his commandments.*

All the sacrifices and ritual observances under the law of *Moses*, were of no value in themselves, but as they either denoted purity of heart and life, or were such instances of obedience in indifferent matters, as would by degrees bring that awkward people up to the discipline of substantial moral virtue and holiness.

This matter was settled betwixt our Saviour and that honest *scribe* in the gospel, who gave him such good satisfaction about the moral law, *Mat. xii. 33.* That *to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our understanding, with all our soul, and with all our strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.* And long before the coming of our Lord, their Prophets had told them plain enough, that all those observances were rather provoking and detestable in the sight of God, when they were so punctually performed, whilst *mercy, judgment, and righteousness,* were wholly disregarded.

Under the gospel, all the institutions and doctrines of our religion are to promote moral goodness: Hearing and reading the word of God, the necessity of Baptism, the obligation to the frequent receiving the Lord's Supper, all prayer and Church-communion, are to forward this *whole duty of man, to fear God and keep his commandments.*

Nay,

Nay, that faith itself that we are so much called upon for through the whole gospel, is all in order to the practice of a good life; and when it stands alone, and doth not effect what is required of it, it is as fruitless and as little accepted, as the sacrifices under the law. Therefore St. *James* declares against it as the Prophets against those; as that which is *dead* and senseless when it is alone, and not enlivened by *good works*.

The degeneracy of Christianity was so early, it seems, that because faith was so much required, and so strictly called for, some thought they might acquiesce in the lazy theory of Christian principles, without the true substance of religion, which is here our *whole duty of man, fearing God and keeping his commandments*. Tho' indeed for this very reason was the world summon'd in, to embrace the doctrines of the gospel by faith; because a sound and full persuasion and conviction of our understandings must necessarily invigorate a conformable practice. *For he that comes unto God, doth surely believe that he is, or else would never make any such approach*: So he that believeth that *God is, and that he is a rewarder of all those that diligently seek him*, and will everlastingly destroy those that continue and die in disobedience, will most certainly, if he be in his right mind, and his faith be as sound as he professes, with all diligence come unto him, and receive from him all rules and measures for the government of his life. So again, he that soundly believeth that *Jesus Christ came into the flesh, to do and*
suffer

SERMON XXXII.

Of Covetousness.

LUKE XII. 15.

And he said unto them, Take heed and beware of Covetousness.

COVETOUSNESS, tho' in itself a sin, the most odious and pernicious, in the Scriptures, the most strictly and frequently forbid, rank'd among the most horrible crimes, or by some signal mark and character enhanced above them, and to the design of the gospel as opposite as is *God* and *mammon*; yet under the disguises of prudence, and self-preservation, and provident industry, it hath unluckily crept among the rudiments of moral virtues, and been so advanced above the rest, that all the rules of our education must be proportioned to it. *It* is commonly the severe injunction of our parents, and all accomplishments are accounted but unnecessary and chargeable that are not subservient to its promotion,

Sunt

*Sunt quædam vitiorum elementa, his protinus illos
Imbuit, & cogit minimas ediscere sordes.*

was long ago the observation of an heathen
* poet. What care was taken by the provident
parent for proficiency in this vice!

For indeed we are never esteem'd wise, till we
come to know the world, and are skill'd in all
its selfish and inhospitable maxims; such as look-
ing to the *main chance*, securing ourselves, serving
ourselves first, and the like ill-natur'd principles,
till, by an immoderate love of ourselves, charity
(unless what begins at home) is become no duty
with us, is not only cold, but quite benumb'd,
and our neighbours must look to themselves,
for ought they are to expect from us farther
than our own interest and advantage.

We are never esteem'd hopeful, till we dare
use all the means and contrivances to grow
rich, that are not obnoxious to the law, that
fall not under the direct penalty of felony,
thinking nothing unlawful which is not branded
with the name of theft and rapine, but that all
things are within our Christian liberty which
can't be question'd at the bar of human justice.

Mox acquirendi docet insatiabile votum.

As the *Satyrist* goes on in the instructions for
avarice.

So great is our encouragement too in the prac-
tice of this vice, that our actions shall be ac-
counted

* Juv. Sat. 14. Et Pater ergo Animi, &c.

— Juvenes hortatur, ut illam
Ire viam pergant, & eidem incumbere sectæ.

counted wisdom, our riches God's blessings, and our gain godliness. So great and sweet is our advantage, and so strictly are we disciplin'd to it, that the improvement is quick and easy, and becomes the pleasant toil of our whole lives: it is itself a sin of such life and vigour, that its growth is not stunn'd in the least by the decays of nature: It improves with gray hairs, and comes not to its height till when, miserable wretches, we are quite disabled from enjoying the fruits of our avarice. When all other sins out of necessity or common decency must be discarded, as inconsistent with our gravity, unbecoming our persons or places, or repugnant to our worldly designs and interest, or sometimes debilitating our crazy bodies and hastening our ends; *this* is to be retain'd as a comfort and nourishment in old age, as a sin pliant and sociable, conformable to all our purposes and designs, not only promoting our gain, but also our health and the pleasures and contentment of our whole lives. Drunkenness, profaneness, wantonness and such other indeed horrible crimes, are the only sins we seem to dread and shake our heads at, as tho' we trembled to offend our heavenly Father by such heinous enormities; but alas! they are such as our dignities, our persons or places and stations, our age or constitutions, or the least grain of prudence obligeth us to detest; whilst *avarice* escapes our censure, and imperceptibly insinuates itself into our practice, rather encouraged and welcomed by us, than brought into question, thought as an enemy, put to a tryal, suspected of the least guilt

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or harm, tho' certainly the more unpardonable as it is far the more injurious vice.

Nay farther yet, it haunts us to our very death-beds, and never leaves us to the last gasp, so that our last groans must be disturb'd with the incessant clamours of this sin; whilst sollicitously we sum up all in our last will and testament, whilst we are wholly intent on the disposing and dispensing out what our large consciences have rak'd together; in the mean time, taking no thought for the world we are going into; only slightly committing ourselves into the hands of the Almighty, and so, in one word or poor ejaculation, think ourselves rid of that care. And thus falls the vain covetous man, by hoarding up, and not enjoying what he hath got, he dies to the joy of all about him. But is this the talent we are to improve? Are we sent into the world, only to plunder and pillage it, and then to leave it? Do we we pretend to so prudent and wary a foresight of our necessities, and can we look no farther than this life? Make large provisions for an instant, and have no regard to eternity? Doth our eternal happiness depend upon the thrifty but religious management of our little time here? and is it all too little to compass that which we are the least to enjoy? when our souls may be required at the very purchase, when God shall cut us off at the moment of our gainful success, and plentiful incomes, and an irresistible fate shall cross upon us, and supersede all our good fortune.

Neither is this sin the peculiar of some few, that bear the name of covetous and sordid, but
of

of the most general practice: the greedy worldling covets, to fill his coffers; and the prodigal oft-times as ravenously, to enlarge his expences, and make a more ample provision for his lusts: The ambitious man, to keep up his honour by some popular and chargeable acts of generosity, by a vain-glorious and sensual hospitality or a pompous equipage: And the more civilized and devout, out of a pretended prudential provision for futurities, or a necessary and indispensable care (as they would have it call'd) for the maintenance of their families, and an handsome subsistence for posterity, for which they could never yet make a stint or standing measure; and, with leave of their pretended religion, they will ever think it more safe to trust their own than the providence of God.

But besides these, there are thousands of monsters for the world (the greatest in it) that shall rake and tear beyond them all, that are not generous enough for any expensive designs, have not an heart for any sort of prodigality, nor the least provident consideration for those that shall come after, nay, sometimes no probable, scarce a possible prospect of issue, nor any designation for a friend or relict, and least of all for charitable uses; and yet they get and hoard up to the extremity of avarice and ill-nature; till by a certain parsimonial intemperance, they are swell'd up into such a prodigious bulk of wealth as must necessarily turn to a surfeit, they have no manner of digestion, no natural vent or evacuation, nor will they submit to any prescription; their case is very desperate, and the symp-

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toms mortal: observe the strange and contrary operation, as it is described by *Zophar*, Job xx. 15. *The wicked that hath swallowed down riches, shall vomit them up again; God shall cast them out of his belly.*

Thus doth this sin in some relation or other possess the hearts of all, where it quietly resides and lies latent, either under some other (not greater) more eminent and notorious vice, or else is obscured by the practice of some petty virtue, or the thin but specious guise of religion. It makes no noise or disturbance: other sins have concomitant inconveniences that often expose the offender to unavoidable danger or scandal: This is more tame and gentle; it can quietly dwell with its opposite vices: It is a friend to prodigality itself, and helps it out at its needs, and furnishes it in all its extravagances: It is no offence to gravity, neither doth it thwart the pretences to piety; it sometimes uses munificence for a cover, and couches unobserv'd under charity itself. And these are the reasons it is so amicably dealt with, that it falls not under the lash with other sins, but escapes by a general consent; as though all men were let loose to get whatever lies within their reach, and had combined to pardon each other; like that nation that educated their children in the subtleties of filching and purloining, and executed no penalty against counterfeiting and robbery, because it was every man's privilege.

I have made choice of this subject, as thought peculiarly applicable to this day, * on which we

VOL. II.

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pray

* Preached at *Christ-Church* Canterbury, on *St. Matthew's* day.

pray, that " God who by his blessed Son had
 " called *Matthew* from the receipt of custom, to
 " be an Apostle and Evangelist, would grant
 " us grace to forsake all covetous desires and
 " inordinate love of riches." And I find that in
 most accounts and relations that are recorded of
 him in history, *covetousness* is more especially
 treated upon; as he was a signal example of a
 contrary disposition and practice: for tho' as to
 his secular office and employment, avarice and
 exaction by the more covetous *Pharisees* might be
 charged upon him, as on all *Publicans*; yet he
 gave the most demonstrable evidence, that he
 could not be inclin'd to that vice, when he so hos-
 pitably entertain'd our Lord and his followers at
 his table, and called in so many of his own pro-
 fession, that they, if possible, might come in to
 the happy advantage and opportunity of con-
 version; and then renounced both preferment
 and possessions, which are said to have been large,
 and follow'd the divine call. Far be it from any
 Disciple of the Son of God (*Judas* only except-
 ed) to be followers of the world, rather than of
 Christ Jesus the only Saviour of it.

But the vileness of this sin, and all its ill-qua-
 lities, we shall have occasion farther to display
 under these following heads:

- I. How odious and pernicious it is in its own
 nature, and mischievous in its consequences.
- II. The latitude and extent of it, and what
 actions may be justly accounted *covetousness*.
- III. How expressly repugnant it is to the ho-
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Jerome

of COVETOUSNESS. 323

ly Scriptures, but especially to the very design of the Gospel, tho' taken in the most moderate sense.

I. How odious and pernicious it is in its own nature, and mischievous in its consequences. Among all God's creatures, *covetousness* is the peculiar of man alone: The sin that made up the greatest part of that curse, pronounced against him at his fall, when he was no sooner thrown out of paradise, but he was presently hamper'd in the affairs of the world; condemn'd to the manuring and improving the earth, to the solicitous provision of food and raiment, and the drudgery of growing rich: whilst in this the more happy beasts, less prone to the earth, that never faultred in their natural innocency, nor lapsed from their original estate, are never torment-ed with an appetite that extends farther than a present supply. *The young lions*, says the Psalmist, *roar after their prey, but they seek their meat from God*, Psal. civ. 21. A character and quality the covetous man could never deserve; who as rarely puts his trust in God, as his treasure in his neighbour's keeping. Vulturs, and tigers, and wolves, and the whole race of rapacious animals, are at rest, they are filled; but the pretended-rational worldling, more bestial than the worst of brutes, is never satisfy'd with fullness itself; all he hunts down and makes his prey, is but a whet to his voracious appetite.

To nature therefore we cannot ascribe the origine of this sin; it is purely *spiritual*, as St. *Jerome* styles it, independent of natural propensity,

sity, and thence infers, that it is of the more difficult cure, and of the deeper guilt. Shall a man then, that is almost hal'd and drag'd to the commission of sin by the violence of his lusts, be branded with the name of debauch, given over to Satan as reprobate and incorrigible? And shall not the covetous man be much more inexcusable, whom neither * common justice, nor the bonds of friendship, the fear of God, nor the shame of the world, can ever tie up from promoting his ends? which through the whole course of his life he eagerly drives on, never provoked or incited by any true natural lust, and never gratifies any? Shall we nauseate and detest the voracity of the glutton and drunkard, who often come so near a satisfaction, that a surfeit shall put a stop to their craving appetites, and who by their sin do considerable injury to none but themselves? And shall not the insatiable desires of the covetous be much more detestable, who want † even what they possess, who still become the more eager and rapacious, the more they devour, and are never cloy'd, though they swallow down the houses and inheritances of the innocent? whose injuries too are so extensive, that they seldom compass their vast designs, bring their projectings and contrivances of gain to a head, without the oppression of a multitude? || There is scarce an evil or mischief that can be imagined, that hath not some time or other been the consequence

* *Quæ Reverentia Legum?*

Quis Metus aut Pudor est unquam properantis avari? Juv. Sat. 14.

† *Avaro deest tam quod habet, quam quod non habet.*

‡ *Iude ferè scelerum Causa.* —

quence of this sin. * What inhumanities, what bloody massacres are there upon record, that have not chiefly proceeded from the suggestions of avarice? It hath burst asunder the bonds of all societies, and lain at the bottom of all cruel wars and dissensions.

If we consider it in the publick, what is interest but covetousness, and all state policy but to promote it? Ambition itself must be subservient to it, and all terms of honour dispens'd with to enlarge its bounds: pacts and covenants are but slender obligations, where it reigns, and Christianity itself too low a fence against its violences and predations.

It reduces us all to that state of war, which some have maintain'd to be the first state of nature, when every one stands upon his own guard, and keeps a distance from all of the same kind: where the strongest arm and the longest sword gets and defends the largest possessions, and men live in perpetual skirmish, it racks them with jealousies and surmises, to take every man for an enemy, and distrust every action for a cheat; prompts them to secret villainies and machinations against the estates, and sometimes the lives of others, to advance their own fortunes.

All amity and friendship is limited by it, and kindnesses extend no farther than a requital: Duty and obedience hence receive their laws, and subjects think themselves ty'd by no other principles than what are consistent with their gain, which they ever look upon as their inviolable property.

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* ———— *Seda Cupido**Indomiti census* ———— *Juv. Sat. 14.*

When a nation is infected with this distemper, how unquiet and ungovernable doth it quickly become: ready to start into rebellion upon every tax; clamour at all the necessary expences of their prince that are not measur'd by their own penury; quarrel at the government and ministry, when ever they find the current of their gain disturb'd or interrupted; nay, sometimes make the lives of their governours satisfy for their losses, when the decay of trade and the murmuring complaints of publick mis-carriages shall once heat them up into tumult and sedition; as signal examples have been made especially in republicks.

The mischief is as extensive, when it soars up into the hearts of Princes; when did we hear of a tyrant, whose cruelty and oppression did not chiefly consist in this sin? It seiz'd on *Ahab* like a severe disease, and made him take his bed, for *Naboth's* vine-yard: And the wicked son of *Josiah* is thus accus'd by the prophet *Jeremy*. Chap. xxii. ver. 17. *Thine eyes and thy heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression and for violence to do it*: such inhumanities being the usual attendants upon this sin.

When ministers of state, and subordinate magistrates in places of trust and profit, are tainted with it, no one can be ignorant of the sad consequences; justice dethron'd and expos'd to sale, and innocence must purchase it, or be oppress'd. Those stations are hazardous and uncertain, and very liable to be taken away, so then an estate and family must be rais'd up in all haste: the publick

publick revenue is nearest at hand, and best able to bear it; and the greatness of the prize or prey did ever give a reputation to the robbery.

And lastly, To pursue this cursed vice thro' all its holds; when by the power and subtlety of Satan, it shall unhappily creep into the Church, then must the malignancy necessarily be as extensive as the influences of religion. And as it hath been the most catholick sin in many ages of the Church, so hath it never fail'd of subjecting both her politicks and devotions to the promotion of its ends; but with all hath proved destructive to her very patrimony as well as honour: so that sacrilege in the layety (the highest species in this vice) hath been thought a necessary (but very unrighteous) expedient to restrain avarice in the clergy. And certainly, if we consider the nature of this sin, we shall find that these effects are not contingent, but more than common, and almost necessary; for it proceeds from such selfish principles, that are aw'd neither by law, conscience or common civility: and therefore is the most unsociable sin, that renders men subject to hypocrisy, flattery, deceit, malice and all inhospitable vices, and infallibly makes them incapable of being true friends; because always, as *mammon* in the service of God, self-interest will interpose in the offices of friendship. All duties of charity, liberality and gratitude, all generous and publick spirited inclinations, all obligations to mutual love and communion, and even the law of nature, must quit all force and influence, and submit to the more powerful suggestions of avarice: For as *no man can serve God*

and mammon, so whosoever is addicted to this vice, is so eager a zealot in its prosecution, that all time, parts, and industry exerted to the utmost, are never thought strenuous and potent enough to advance its ends; and neither country, friends, relations, nor God himself, shall ever intercept the devotion that is paid to the deity of riches. But lest too many should think to escape the imputation of this dreadful vice, let us

II. Consider the latitude and extent of avarice, and what actions may be justly accounted covetous. Avarice consists either in the immoderate love and desire of riches, the indirect as also the hasty ways of purchasing, the close and tenacious ways of keeping them, or the sordid and niggardly ways of dispensing them: In which sense it is large and comprehensive, and perhaps few of our actions will escape the guilt. But if we take our measures from the Scriptures, to whose rules, tho' never so far more severe than those of common morality, we must conform, we shall find ourselves more closely tied up; and tho' we allow the largest and most indulgent interpretation, a moderate and necessary provision is only lawful, a too solicitous one is strictly forbid as inconsistent with the cares for heaven.

The primitive Christians therefore thought it was indispensibly their duty, upon their admittance into the privileges of Christ's religion, to bid farewell to the world, to quit all propriety and enjoy every thing in common: which practice shews, that even what we call a prudential covetousness was not then consistent with their profession; tho'

tho' it doth not oblige us to an imitation. For,

1. Then it was necessary, when the Church was but as 'twere one family, that a general and common provision should be made for it, as also that those who by embracing the cross, had disprivileged themselves from publick communities and employments, might be maintain'd and kept in the faith. Besides

2. It was the will and pleasure of God in these first times to put them upon such severe tryals, as offering up their lives and estates, to shew to the world what a generous and resolute assent was both requir'd and given to his religion that was then to be establish'd; tho' the same actual testimony of our faith, he doth not demand of us, because he gives us not the same occasions: and as the one obligation ceases, because we are not under the same hard circumstances of persecution, so doth the other of offering up our estates for the same reason.

A pious and profoundly learned divine * (as he was justly stiled) of our Church, hath assigned another reason of these large and voluntary offerings, of laying down the price of their possessions sold at the Apostles feet, viz. " That they were *Jews* and only *Jews*, " that did so, who once believing in Christ, " believed also the woeful destruction of their " own nation to be within a few years after, " and therefore they thought good, while there " was yet time, to improve their lands and possessions, to the use which they should not " many years enjoy; and the occasion was " now

* Mr. Mede's Discourse on Agur's Prayer, p. 127.

“ now fit, at the first preaching of the gospel
 “ and gathering of a Church to Christ, to fur-
 “ nish the Apostles and others for this service
 “ and employment. ”

But surely this notion and account cannot be creditably admitted, to which he was led by the subject he was upon, *viz.* “ His zeal
 “ against the pretences of the *Monks*, in follow-
 “ ing ages, for the perfection of a Christian
 “ life in a voluntary poverty, grounded on this
 “ example of the first Christians. ” Because
 1st, It is not evident they were all *Jews*, and none but *Jews*, and if they were, they were *Jews* of other nations, *Act.* xxv. whose fortunes were not bound up with the fate of *Jerusalem*, and who might easily have transmitted their effects to the proper places they belonged unto; for many of them were *strangers* in *Jerusalem*. 2^{dly}, It requires farther proof, Whether the sudden destruction of *Jerusalem* was an article of faith, which they conclusively believed from their general faith in Christ. 3^{dly}, It too much disparages that great action, so signal an instance of their piety and loyalty to the cause, and of the mighty power of the Holy Ghost upon them; and makes it look designing and self-ended, by giving up their estates for generous and holy purposes indeed; but upon a prospect, that they should otherwise in a little time be desolated, or taken from them.

However it was, we are not to think, that the Christians of those times did either reject or wholly disregarded God's temporal blessings,
 but

but were thankful to him for them, and reckoned them as instances of his goodness and mercy, and were careful in the management and lawful improvement of the same; altho' they thought it indispensibly their duty, to part with what they had for the subsistence and relief of the poor Saints; or if their persecutors required it of them, rather than let go their professions, or be guilty of any act of *Resistance* against an established Authority; for then *Non-resistance* was a Christian principle. But they could never think it unlawful to possess estates, or set a value on the temporal blessings of divine providence, so long as they did not stand in competition with their Christian profession and vocation: And this appears from the repeated advices of St. Paul, that *every man should work and eat his own bread, and abide in his calling*. For an early degeneracy was made from the Apostle's practice: There were a sort of pretended Christians, that called themselves *Apostolici*, who in a mistaken imitation of the Apostles left all they had, and gave themselves up to a voluntary poverty and a *Recabite* life; and held it unlawful to possess any thing: Hence too called *Encratitæ*, *Apotactici*, or *Renouncers* of the world, but reckoned by *Epiphanius* (*de Heret.*) for the most infamous hereticks, as descendents from *Tatian*, and part of the old *Kathari* or *Puritans*, with whom they were condemn'd in an edict by *Theodosius*; and such as indeed by their wild and vain-glorious pretences, occasioned many prejudices in the wiser heathens, and

and those scoffing reproaches from *Julian* the Apostate, who branded the Christians more, especially with the name of *Galileans*, because of the wandering about of some of them as despicable forlorn wretches, under the humble pretences of an affected poverty; and would not touch them in their lives and fortunes, because it was their pride to be poor and suffer; and therefore, in one of his *orations* *, he compares them to the *Cynicks*, that scandalous sect of philosophers. And truly by what account both he and *Epiphanius* give of them, they seem to be the founders of those *Mendicant* or begging orders, which to this day make such a mock figure of humility in the *Romish Church*, and are so great a reproach to it. But what e'er is the blame of these zealots; we may observe that avarice is now become so genuine, and so well suited to all professions of Christian religion, that among all the numerous Sects of late started up among us, there is not one that hath been found guilty of following any such *Apostolick Renunciations*: even those that will not talk, nor walk, nor salute, nor wear cloaths like other men, yet most strictly retain their homage and devotion to the *mammon of unrighteousness*. Primitive Christian innocence and simplicity is their specious outward appearance, but you may see they are very *Jews* in their trading and commerce, in the prosecution of all their worldly affairs.

But to return from this digression; not to conform to primitive self-denial in this case, we must

* *Vide* Crat. 7. de Cyn, Sect. p. 417.

must not account covetousness; nor are we to bid an utter adieu to the world, without a commission, without an enemy to put us to the test, or extort it from us: Christianity being now established by publick authority, and the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of Christ. There is now a nearer correspondence with the world permitted us, tho' no perfect union, or inviolable league of amity and friendship, nor an entire cessation of arms; we are still to stand upon our guard, we must keep it at a distance, and then we may use it. We may make such a covenant with it as the *Israelites* did with the *Gibeonites*, admit it among us, but then to enslave it, and not suffer it to enslave us; to use it for our necessities and conveniences, and in every thing to make it subservient to our religion; as they employed those slaves, to be *hewers of wood and drawers of water* to the congregation.

But notwithstanding this indulgence and fair permission to a moderate acquisition and enjoyment of God's temporal blessings, there are ('tis to be fear'd) but few among us that are not tainted with that sin, which both reason and scripture will call *covetousness*. We may pretend we go no farther, than common prudence and a natural care direct us; but before we are aware we become eager and violent in getting, overthrift and solicitous in keeping together what we have got, and close and tenacious in parting with it; all which will be very apt to engross the principal of our thoughts, and the intenseness of our hearts, and doth manifestly betray

tray a distrust of providence, which as it can in a moment blast all the fruits of our industry and prudence, so likewise is it sufficient to provide for us without so much of their officious assistance.

It is said of *Cain's* sin, that it consisted in not rightly dividing betwixt God and himself; the covetous man is that wicked *Cain*, that unconscionable divider, that observes no manner of proportion or equality: The most, the best, the vigour of his time and strength, his utmost policy and cunning, the energy and spriteliness of his affections and desires, are cheerfully employed and exerted towards the advance of his worldly designs and ends: whilst his religion is shut up into narrow corners and scantlings of his leisure and convenience, and after a cold and short reception is soon dismissed, for the world calls away and requires his attendance. We are all verily guilty in this matter; and pray! what is this but covetousness? We plead the natural principles of self-love, that we must look to the main chance, secure a livelihood for ourselves and families; but true self is our souls, and true self-interest is their eternal provision. The love of the world is no love of ourselves, but the loving our worst enemy, who takes the advantage of our passion and weakness, and would wholly enslave us to himself, will never admit of any rival, nor suffer any spiritual or heavenly designs, to intervene or stand in competition with his. This *mammon*, this *god of this world*, hates that we should be cold, or so much as luke-warm in our affections and desires towards him, or flow
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and inactive in our progress, but loves incessant and entire votaries. And as it is difficult not to go beyond our necessities and a competent sufficiency, so is it utterly impossible to prosecute our ends farther, without a manifest love and affection to that which we labour to obtain: and this is *avarice* in a strict and down-right sense, when we set our affections on things below, and make them the object and end of all cares and labours, and the superiour and preferable business, for which we were sent into the world.

Now covetousness consisteth as well in saving as getting, and tho' *this* be the gainful effect of this sin, yet *that* is the life and constant nourishment of it: he that is not free of those good things he can well spare, and to that purpose are by God entrusted with him, is a constant gainer, and so both ways chargeable with avarice: It is an undoubted sign he loves his wealth better than works of charity, but God loveth a *cheerful giver, and the covetous doth his soul abhor.*

And yet again, tho' a man might otherwise seem free and generous, and more inclining to the opposite vice of prodigality; tho' he make great shews of hospitality, that is, among those that do not want his relief, and be really profuse in his large expences; yet this sin may probably be most predominant in him, which daily caters and provides for his voluptuous and vain-glorious feastings and entertainments; he may be highly uncharitable and sparing where he should be liberal, and so consequently *covetous* in the worst sense. That *rich* chough in the gospel was *cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day,*

day, and no doubt was, what we call noble and generous, had his friends and jolly companions about him, whilst *Lazarus* lay *starving at his gate*: And this vain-glorious and gluttonous *rich man* is set down as a grand example and infamous instance of covetousness.

But it most notoriously consisteth in getting, over-reaching, or unlawfully detaining, what doth not fairly belong unto us; and here the sin indeed is more heinous and complicated with injury and injustice, and directly against the eighth commandment (*thou shalt not steal*): but it cannot consist in a legal demand of a man's rights or dues; for that is but justice and equity, by which societies are preserv'd, and without the greatest malice cannot be branded with the odious name of covetousness. And let the wicked world say what they can, this obligation of justice lies more strictly upon the ministers of God's word and the instructors of his people.

1. Because they ought to endeavour the reducing those they have the charge of, to honesty and a good conscience, according to the law of God. Levit. xix. 17. *not to suffer sin upon their neighbours without a just rebuke.*

2. They ought carefully to maintain and defend the rights of the Church, which being not entirely their own, but a trust, they cannot suffer to be diminished, upon any popular pretence of a meek and passive behaviour, out of any slavish fear of malicious reproaches.

3. They ought, as much as any other men, to be just to themselves and families, and are by no Christian principles obliged to the mortification
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of starving: but are bound by all lawful means to defend themselves from all poverty and distress, and, what is the usual effect of it, scorn and contempt, which ever redounds too to the dishonour of the Church in general. But all this while it is most barbarous usage, that they that shall thus justly and honestly lay claim to their rights, shall be more odious and scandalous in the repute of a great part of the censorious world, than they that most injuriously and censoriously detain them. However, tho' this be their duty, and so no more than only what they may do; yet let their conversation be without covetousness, and their whole proceedings without violation of peace and charity.

I might fit this more general account of Avarice to many particular cases of conscience; but it will take up too much time for a discourse of this nature: And if we appeal to the holy Scriptures the rule of faith and good life; every one may make application, and be sufficient to judge himself. In the third place then,

III. *Covetousness* is most repugnant to the Scriptures, but especially to the very design of the gospel, tho' taken in the most moderate sense.

The *Jews* were by God himself indulg'd the fruition of the world: The promises made to them did not apparently extend any farther. It was their blessing to grow rich, and all their intenseness and concern towards that end was lawful and commendable; because they did but

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make use of the means to attain to God's promises. And they had reason to think themselves highly in his favour, when they prosper'd and thriv'd in the world; for it was the conditional recompence of their obedience: Yet notwithstanding this latitude, covetousness was strictly forbidden: A prohibition included in no less than two of their commandments: Several sad examples made of those that were guilty of it. The covetousness of one single person, *viz.* of *Achan* of the tribe of *Judah*, as we read the story *Josh. vii.* brought a great slaughter upon the armies of the *Israelites*, and a signal destruction upon himself and family. And the like avarice of *Saul* in coveting the spoil of his enemies, did so much incense the Lord against him, that he told his Prophet, that it repented * *him that he had set up Saul to be their King*: Surely the greatest token of displeasure, when to express the vehemency of it, the deity shall seem to do what it really cannot do, to relent and change, and to recall his determinations.

There are also many severe expressions, in the royal and other Prophets, more frequent against this sin, than any other. It was the zealous petition of holy *David*, that God would *incline his heart unto his testimonies, and not unto covetousness*, as tho' the one did necessarily exclude the other. The wicked indeed do bless the covetous, but to what advantage? for † *the Lord abhorreth them*. Many comparisons and allusions we meet with, that very much aggravate and

set

* 1 Sam. xv. 11. † Psal. x. 3.

set forth the odious nature and guilt of this sin : There is not a more wicked thing than a *covetous man*, saith the son of *Syrach* * : *For such an one setteth his own soul to sale, because while he liveth, he casteth away his bowels* : An expression that seems to denote his ravenous and rapacious desires, without true enjoyment to himself, or mercy to others, and the curse of God upon him. *Go to the gods which thou hast served, and the gain thou hast lived unto, and let them deliver thee in the time of tribulation.*

But we live under a different dispensation, and our promises seem directly cross to those of the *Jews* : *Recepisti bona in vitâ tuâ*, was told the *rich man* in hell, to stop his mouth ; his reward was past and gone, not to be expected in both lives. Riches are now often become the allowed blessings, and almost, as we may say, the peculiar assigned inheritances of the wicked ; and poverty and a low condition the common portion of the righteous, and they must stay, for their reward, to the other world.

The whole design and sum of the gospel is chiefly set down by our Lord in his Sermon upon the mount ; the greatest part of which consisted of severe injunctions and restraints, directly opposite to all the selfish principles of pretended prudence and settled maxims of the world. *Lay not up for to-morrow ; -lay not up treasures upon earth ; -take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or what you shall put on ; -give to him that asketh you ; -nay, sell all and give to the poor,* were the terms of admittance into his service.

* *Ecclus. x. 9.*

All which places (tho' not to be taken in the most rigid sense, no more than *cutting off an hand*, or *pulling out an eye*, because then not to be reconciled to other places of Scripture, which admit of a moderate care, and forbid idleness and unthriftiness) must be acknowledg'd to have so much the weight of precepts, that we must not quite lose them in the exposition, or interpret them away to a contrary meaning; or think the prohibition extends no farther, than that we must only abstain from rapine, extortion, and such like vices of avarice, in the excess. For can we think our Saviour gave forth such exalted rules of morality, only in a *Stoical* rant, or some melancholick fit of defiance, when he perceived the frowns of the world, and saw its honours and riches go beside him? no! the offer of all these he refus'd before: his whole life and the rest of his precepts were entirely suitable and conformable to these. How often did he tell his disciples and followers, and enemies, that his *kingdom was not of this world*? How constantly did he check and rebuke them, whenever unwarily, they had suggested the least intimation, or started any question that betrayed the least byas of affection towards temporal ends and designs? And who amongst them was thought fittest to carry the purse but the *son of perdition*? So that of all the villains in the world the Devil pitch'd upon a Covetous miscreant to betray the Lord of Life. *Quid dabitis, & tradam?* Come, *What will ye give me, and I will give you up my lord and master to be murdered.*

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Scarce a parable did he put forth, that did not some way or other relate to the subversion of all such principles, in all his actions manifesting an utter averfeness to the world: Never intermeddling the least in its affairs, refusing to be a judge or decider in its concerns, *Lu. xii. 14.* He seem'd even to shun the society of those that were rich; obliquely answer'd their questions, and retorted their subtilties with as perplexing responses, because their temper and practices had utterly unqualified them for his religion.

It was *avarice* that was the greatest ingredient in that *leaven of Pharisees*, and kept them at such a distance, and made them so often clash with his doctrines. *Luke xvi.* And the *Sadducee's* faith must necessarily fix down all his desires upon this world, because he believed nothing of another.

Who of us come nearer a Christian than that young man in the gospel? Who can vaunt of greater obedience to God's laws, and is so willing for farther instruction? And who would be so unwise to throw away a fair estate, to live upon miracles? to part with a certainty, and cast himself upon providence, and what we call the wide world, and all upon the bare advice of a suspected prophet? Yet because he would not quit these wary and prudential principles, he is utterly rejected, and a dreadful sentence is drawn up against him, and stands in force against all *rich*, that is, against all *covetous* men; whilst other scandalous and notorious sinners were admitted into fellowship, and a woman *taken in adultery* dismiss'd and pardoned.

Who would not be apt, with the rich man in the parable immediately following my Text, to solace himself upon so plentiful a crop and such large incomes, and resolve to sit down with ease and content, and cheer up his soul in the enjoyment of what providence had so bountifully (to that end, as he might think) shower'd down upon him? And yet for these presumptuous resolutions, *his soul must be required*, presently summon'd and call'd for away, and the very next night must put a period to all his projected enjoyments; but saith the *wiseman*, Prov. xxviii. 16. *He that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.*

The Disciples and Apostles followed the blow close, towards the beating down of this sin: *Silver and gold have I none*, says St. Peter in an elevated strain, as tho' he had gloried in professing his poverty, as St. Jerome observes: And in his *Epistles* he is as resolute against it, especially in those who thro' *covetousness* should make merchandize of the people. St. Paul* is forced to quit the hire of the *labourer*, and that maintenance which by God's ordinance he had a right unto, lest, notwithstanding all his pains and labour, he should be suspected of self-ends, and that he had put on a *cloak of covetousness* to preach the Gospel. In several *Epistles* he reckons it up with the most horrid sins, such as *malice, murder, adultery*, as also with *extortion* and *greediness of filthy lucre*; where we must note by the way, he means *covetousness* in our moderate sense, because he sets it down distinct from those that

* 1 Cor. ix. 14.

that are the vices in the excess. Twice he marks it above the rest with the name of *idolatry*; and surely it is so in a more than a metaphorical sense; since we are so charitable to the heathens themselves, to think that few of them terminated their worship in the idol, without farther and higher respect to the Deity that was represented. But this sin proceeding from a diffidence in the true God, the whole faith and confidence of a covetous man is firmly and terminately fixed in the object of his avarice; and judge then who is the greater idolater. Other sins are not so properly Idolatry as this: for tho' the *glutton* is said to make *his belly his god*; and the wanton and lascivious sinner may be said to adore the object of his lust; yet neither settle their faith and confidence upon either, as the worlding ever doth upon his treasure: besides, those voluptuaries sin by fits, have their intermissions and intervals, wherein they hate or remit their pleasures; but the covetous man is a constant and incessant devoto.

I am well aware that a well-known and learned Annotator * hath taken pains to shew, that the original word *Πλεονεξία*, generally render'd *covetousness*, doth also signify excessive and unnatural lusts; and ought to be so interpreted in many places of the *New Testament*: But if we well consider the sense and context of those places, we shall find the common to be the most genuine exposition; as avarice is the most obstructive evil to all the principles of Christian religion: But there it comports with the general drift of that worthy expositor (very observable throughout

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* Dr. Hammond's Annot. Ro. i. 29.

out the whole comment on the Epistles) in throwing all enormities upon those vilest hereticks the *Gnosticks*; and those of lewdness and inordinate lust, which he would have this original word to denote, were their more open and notorious profession and practice even maintain'd amongst them.

But it is sufficient that my Text vindicates itself by the words that follow in the same verse: our Lord's double caution, to *take heed and beware of covetousness*, is enforced by a reason that plainly determines the sense; *for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*: and the subject is carried on in the following parable, wherein are exposed the vain projectings of a covetous worldling, thus concluded ver. 21. *So is he*, that is to say, that fool *that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God*. It is as demonstrable too, that the native signification of the word must be *covetousness* in this sense, in those texts of Scripture where it is called idolatry; because as I have argued already, it would be a very absurd figure, too violent a strain of a metaphor, to call any other sort of concupiscence or sensual lust by that name.

Thus it is plain enough, every one that runs may read, that, according to the doctrines and practice of Christ and his Apostles, *covetousness* above all other sins is most irreconcilable with Christianity: And to pretend to a serious and pious conversation, to devotion, self-denial, any holy disposition or duty required of a Christian, nay, even to that name or title, without the suppression

pression of this sin, is as absurd and monstrous, as to *make long prayers, and devour widows houses*. I might quote Heathen authors, but will give you but the sense of one, sufficiently eminent: *Aristotle* giveth it the down-right meaning of avarice in the common acception, as the native signification, *a desire still of more*, as the excellent *Dr. Sanderson* * observes.

This sin (we ought not to spare ourselves,) lies heavy upon us, as general a charge as ever was made against mankind; but what is most unhappy, it is of all others the likeliest to prove the most remediless; because it receives our applause and approbation, and so never falls under our censure, or is reckon'd in the catalogue of our offences: It seldom causes any regret in us, or do we ever reflect upon any of our actions of this nature; and much less likely are we then to repent, or to be brought to any sorrow or contrition for it, (unless it be for not having coveted enough) having all along accounted it our proper business, almost our duty to be over careful and solicitous in the affairs of the world.

The only way to be convinc'd of this unhappy mistake, is with the Psalmist, to *apply our hearts unto the testimonies of God*, and *not unto covetousness*; unto the Holy Scriptures, which will make us *wise* not unto the world, but *unto salvation*. There we shall be taught a better and easier way of supplying our wants, and that by a godly conversation, which with *contentment* is *great gain*, having *the promise of this life and that which is to come*. For surely the religious man

* *Vide Sanderson's Sermons. 2d Part. Ser. III. ad Magist.*

man, beyond all others, enjoys most of the world, and whatever avarice would reach at, but never attains; because he fully acquiesces, and rest satisfied in, whatsoever his heavenly Father shall assign for him, improving all to the best advantage: he cannot be poor nor miserable, because he knows every condition is for his good, and envies none above him, nor desires their greater abundance. There we shall find too how dreadful a sin this of avarice is; how inconsistent with God's kingdom and the whole design of the gospel; how much it robs him of his honour, no less than idolatry itself. There we shall find, that our *life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which we possess*: that we have higher concerns to mind, greater and more valuable talents to improve, and treasures to lay up; not on the earth, which both expose us and are expos'd themselves to all hazards and dangers, and at last must perish with us; but in the highest heavens, *where neither moth can corrupt, nor thief break through and steal.*

To which place, God of his infinite mercy direct us all by the assistance of his holy spirit, and by living according to his holy gospel, and not according to the dictates of our own worldly wisdom and mistaken prudence and superfluous providence; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

To whom Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, all Power, Majesty and Adoration, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXIII.

Of the *Sabbath*.

MATT. XII. 8.

For the son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day.

THE succession of our Lord's-day into the place of the *Jewish* sabbath, and the strict observation of the same from the commandment that enjoins the other, is so much for the honour of Christianity, and so essential to religious worship, that to maintain the contrary, or that it is purely ceremonial, is a doctrine of very pernicious and impious consequence, and will both defame and deface our most holy religion. The change is established upon Primitive, even upon Apostolick practice, and upon reasons and occasions of nearer concern, than either our creation, or the deliverance of God's people from *Egyptian* bondage: for it was founded upon the Resurrection of our blessed Lord, and the most miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost; and so the words of the Text will not, I hope, be thought foreign to the subjects of these holy solemnities *. These two
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* Preached at *Christ-Church* the Lord's-day following the Ascension, and before the Descent.

mighty transactions gave the firmest establishment, and highest exaltation to the Christian cause and religion, and also sufficient authority (conclusively divine) to the consecration of the *first day* of the week for the same substantial exercises of devotion, for which the *seventh* had before been set a part by the *Jewish* law; of both which our Saviour the son of God, and (to our honour and for our salvation be it spoken) the son of *man* too, is for ever to be acknowledged the absolute and sovereign Lord. And so I come to the words of the Text, that *the son of man is Lord even of the sabbath-day*: and from them shall give you an account;

I. Of the Jewish sabbath, its origine and institution, and the strict observation of it.

II. Of the Christian sabbath, or Lord's-day, and its obligation.

III. In what sense we are to take it, that our Lord, *the son of man is Lord even of the sabbath-day*. And in the handling of each, I shall take all occasions of pressing upon you the strict observation of such a day unto the Lord.

I. Of the Jewish sabbath, its origine and institution, and the strict observation of it. The *Old Testament*, any one that runs may read, is full of the strictest injunctions for the observation of the *seventh* or *sabbath-day*, for which there was a positive law from God; and that inserted in the
decatalogue

decatalogue or *ten commandments*, among the very *moral* laws; that is, such as besides a positive command, had an inherent and immutable obligation from Principles of natural reason. And tho' it would be a very gross absurdity to maintain (as some foolish *Sectaries* have done) that the observation of the Seventh, or the First day of the week was ever *morally* obliging; (certainly no more one in seven, than one in a less or greater number;) yet all men must allow, 1st. That to separate or set apart certain times for the worship of God, is morally obliging, and the greater portion consecrated to that use doth denote the greater devotion. 2^{dly}. That the observation of the *sabbath-day* being made one of the *ten commandments* wrote upon tables of stone by the finger of God, doth afford us a very probable argument, from which we may conclude, that God intended an equality of obligation with the other moral precepts; that it should be as immutable and lasting; only there might be an occasion, very proper and reasonable, to change the day, which is but a circumstance, the substance of the obligation still remaining.

The *recordare*, which enforces the commandment with the stricter charge, (*remember to keep holy the sabbath-day*,) seems to intimate as much, that tho' it be a precept of the same nature with other ritual observances, yet thou must *remember to keep this*, with the highest order even of moral laws.

Now to come to its institution: The first command for the observation of the *sabbath-day* was delivered at *Mara*, *Exod. xv. 25*. There

a statute or ordinance was made for it, and it was renewed again about forty-days after, in the *decatalogue*, with an emphatical *remembrance to keep it holy*; and for the same purpose, to invigorate the authority and obligation, a reference was made to the creation.

But the first sabbath that we ever read of that was actually kept, upon the fore-mentioned ordinance, was in the desert of *Sin*, which is said to lie between *Elim* and *Sinai*, (Exod. xvi. 1.) whether the people of *Israel* arrived upon the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure out of *Egypt*; and there (*ver.* 2.) the whole congregation murmured against *Moses* and *Aaron*: But the business must be compromised by a miracle from heaven; *Manna* was to descend from thence the next day being the sixteenth; but on the twenty-second none descended, nor on the seventh day for the future; they being allowed to gather a double portion on the sixth: So the people *rested on the seventh day*, *ver.* 30. which was this twenty-second of this second month. If they had rested or kept a sabbath before, it must have been on the fifteenth day: But on that they had took a wearysome journey, and fell to complaining of their hard entertainment in the wilderness, as you read in the beginning of this chapter.

Now tho' this first institution of the Sabbath-day be computed to be near two thousand five hundred years after the Creation, yet by a miracle of providence the true Seventh day from thence was said to be discover'd: The spirit of God upon *Moses* and *Aaron* might be sufficient to fix that aright, if it were a material point. However the

the Creation might justly have the preference of commemoration in the commandment for the *sabbath*; yet the peculiar Deliverance out of the *Egyptian* bondage was the primary occasion of its institution: as you may read in the commandment itself as it is repeated again, Deut. v. 14, 15. *The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God — And remember thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and stretched out arm: Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day; and* no reference here is made to the Creation.

That a *sabbath-day* was ever observ'd before this time, we have no reason or authority to believe or maintain; such a solemn observance, returning so often as once a week, must certainly have been recorded in the holy lives of the *Patriarchs*; either before or after the *deluge*, or in their long abode in the land of *Egypt*.

That in the short history of the creation it is so remarkably mentioned, *Gen. ii. 2, 3.* as tho' it had then been instituted, must be by an usual figure called a *Prolepsis*, by which the inspired *historian*, who well knew the sacred ordinance of such a day upon another occasion, by a certain anticipation, makes a reference of it to the creation; which being cast into the work of *six days*, it is said *God rested the seventh day, and hallowed it.*

That the commandment was no earlier, is no more a diminution of its obligation, than it is to the *first* and *second* in the decalogue; that till then there was no express one against *idolatry* itself.

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The greatest stress was ever laid upon the observance of it, with a manifest preference to all other rites of the ceremonial law. The first *sabbath-breaker*, tho' but gathering sticks upon that day, was *stoned to death* by an express sentence from God himself, *Numb. xv.* And it hath ever been observed, that, when so signal an example is made upon the first breach of a divine law, it is done to strike terror upon all future violators; who tho' not punished in the same manner, yet are thence to take notice of the strictness of the law, and a certain reserve of judgment to come. Be sure the profanation of so sacred a day, by *lewd practices*, or any *immoral acts*, must be far more heinous than *picking of sticks*, or doing any other indifferent or harmless thing allowable on every common day; and consequently the punishment may prove much sorer, unless prevented by a sound repentance.

Circumcision was the seal of the covenant, and the distinguishing mark (and they thought an honourable one) of a *Jew*; it had many strict injunctions, and was dignified with many notifications of purity and holiness; yet it was not inserted in the *decalogue* amongst the moral laws; and it was suspended in the wilderness, where that of the sabbath, which they thought no time or place could dispense with, had its primary or strictest obligation.

Their numerous sacrifices and oblations of all sorts, were strictly commanded, and they were nice and punctual in the observance of them, and valued themselves upon the exactness of that obedience and formality: yet we meet with frequent

quent invectives of the Prophets against them, as tho' they had never been commanded, whilst on all occasions they call upon them for the strict observance of the *holy Sabbath*.

The Prophet *Isaiah* (in the first and last chapters of his prophesy more especially) is very severe upon them in this matter; as tho' they did what was quite forbidden, because they did not answer the end of the commandment. *To what end is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord: I delight not in the blood of bullocks; who hath required this at your hands? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me.—He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man: He that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dogs neck: He that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swines blood: He that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.* Isa. i. 11, 12, 13. lxvi. 3. All perfect satyr against their unfavoury and fulsome obedience, even to these laws of God; whilst the *Sabbath* was retain'd and encouraged in the closest and constant observance.

It is true, this Prophet saith too in the name of the Lord; *Your new moons and sabbaths I cannot away with*, chap. i. ver. 13. but that passage relates to some superstitious and heathen observances, which were corruptions of their own invention, quite beside the commandment of *keeping holy the Sabbath-day*.

For chap. lvi. he pronounces from the Lord, signal blessings on those that *keep the sabbath* from polluting it, that shall *do* those good acts, and *refrain* from those evil ones there mentioned, which

must accompany the due and true observation of an holy sabbath; that whether eunuchs or strangers, they shall have a place and name better than of *sons and daughters*; be brought into his holy mountain, and made joyful in his house of prayer, have all the blessings and privileges of true Israelites. And again, chap. lviii. the promise is renewed to those that *keep the sabbath**, not to themselves or their own pleasure, but to the Lord, whose *delight* it is, *the holy of the Lord and honourable, not doing their own ways, not finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words*, but devoting the whole day to the pleasure and service of God.

The Prophet *Jeremy* likewise seems hardly to allow their sacrifices to have been originally established by law. Thus saith the Lord— *I spake not to your fathers, nor commanded them; — concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people*, Jer. vii. 22, 23. but chap. xvii. 19. &c. such signal declarations are made for the renewing of the covenant in *hallowing the sabbath*, as the whole fortunes of the people and their kings depended upon it. *Thus said the Lord unto me, Go stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in and go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem, and say unto them, both to the kings and inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem; thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves; bear no burden on the sabbath-day, neither do any work, but hallow ye the sabbath-day, as I commanded your fathers; and if*

* Vide Calv. & Grot. in loc.

ye diligently hearken unto me to do accordingly, then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes, sitting upon the throne of David, in all pomp and state, as there set forth, for the lasting establishment of both prince and people in prosperity, and the exercise of true religion in the house of the Lord. But if ye will not hearken to me, to hallow the sabbath: then will I kindle a fire in the gate, and it shall devour the palaces in Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched: which denunciation seems to threaten the greatest and most lasting evils against the whole nation, upon the prophanation of their sabbath-day.

And truly it was no instance of superstition among the *Jews* (tho' they were very apt to be fanciful and extravagant both in their notions and practices relating to this day) to maintain, that the *religious observation* of the *sabbath-day* was a great security of blessings from heaven to their princes and people.

And it is no *Sabbatarian* preciseness to say, that the general neglect and profanation of the *Lord's day* or *Christian-sabbath*, ought to be reckoned amongst those other crying sins (tho' not at the head of them, nor to be look'd upon as the sole one) that bring down any judgments and calamities upon us: since by so slighting and contemptuous a practice our *Christian religion* is not only very much defaced, but a manifest disregard is shewn to the redemption of the world from sin and everlasting death: whilst the more grateful *Jews* have so long and so solemnly commemorated their deliverance out of *Egyptian* bondage.

The Prophet *Ezekiel* chargeth them from the mouth of God, with all baseness and ingratitude under his many miraculous blessings; and above the rest saith the Lord; *Moreover also I gave them my sabbath, to be a sign betwixt me and them, that they may know that I am the Lord that sanctifieth them: But the house of Israel rebelled against me, my Sabbaths they greatly polluted. Then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, and consume them,* Ezek. xx. 12, 13.

All religions both true and false have their signs: the worshippers of the beast received his mark, and the followers of the lamb had the mark of him and his father's in *their forehead*; and hence was the ancient use of the *cross* as the Christian badge or sign: so was the *sabbath* the Jewish sign, the badge of the covenant *holy and honourable*; as you will find the institution for that purpose. *Exod. xxxi. 12 — Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep, for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you; and the profanation is there made capital: Every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: and the reason repeated after that, ver. 16, 17. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout all generations for ever, for a perpetual covenant: it is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever.*

I have the longer insisted upon this point, to shew, that tho' the institution of the *Jewish sabbath* hath been of a later date, than hath commonly or rather vulgarly been allowed, and tho' of the same nature in itself with other ritual observances,

vances, yet the observation of it hath been so strictly and solemnly required by God, above those common rites and ceremonies, that its obligation seems to have been rais'd to an equality with a *moral* law, tho' itself be no such thing. No doctrine or precept ought to have any greater authority by being settled upon the wrong, tho' it be the more desirable or preferable foundation. But it is time now our own *Lord's-day* should succeed and take place. Therefore, as in duty and reason bound, we are,

II. To enquire into the constitution of our *Christian Sabbath* or *Lord's-day*, and its obligation. *Christianity* is a purer œconomy or dispensation than that of the law: says the author of it, *God is a spirit, and to be worshiped in spirit and truth*; but so he was under the law, as well as now under the Gospel, and now as well as then. Altho' he be a spirit; yet upon our account, who dwell in bodies, there must of necessity be the solemnities of *time* and *place* for his worship.

We have concluded already, That to separate or set apart time for God's service is morally obliging; now the more holy and strict the constitution of Christian religion is, the stronger and of more force, must all moral obligations be under it: we may easily then reason ourselves into the necessity of a *Christian Sabbath*, altho' we have no positive command for it through the whole *New Testament*. What! shall the *Jews* set apart *one day in seven*, with so much strictness in devotion, for the commemoration of some signal temporal blessings and the worship of God who gave them?

And will not Christians afford as much, or should not they give him more, who pretend to higher sanctity, and to be advanced in their obligations to true holiness? Shall *their deliverance* out of *Egypt*, and *descent* of *manna* in the wilderness call for a weekly remembrance, *remember to keep holy*, &c. And shall not *our redemption* from sin and death, our own justification, and that of our religion accomplished by our Lord's *rising from the dead* on the *first day of the week*, and the *descent* also of the *Holy Ghost* on the same day, in full completion of all our Christian blessings and glories, be sufficient to consign over and consecrate that day to the most sacred uses of adoration and thanksgiving?

Our blessed Lord did never discourage the true and right observance of the *Jewish Sabbath*: in justice he might insist upon the title of being *Lord of it*: he came to *fulfil the law*, and to raise all Moral obligations to the highest strain of obedience, and amongst the Ceremonial to retrieve their *sabbath* from superstition and absurdity. Had he declar'd one syllable in express derogation to it, they would have desired no better an occasion to have exercised their *Jus zelotarum*, their pretended right of *zealots* or *godly executioners*; would soon have gathered up stones to dispatch him out of the world, without the formality of a legal prosecution.

But the perverse and provoking notions the *Pharisees* had of their *Sabbath*, and their insufferable blindness in the observance of it, was not to be born with: he took all occasions to set them right; but neither reason nor miracle could

do it, tho' he never fail'd of reducing them to the most shameful absurdities. The occasion of the *Text* you have from the beginning of this chap. before you: *As Jesus went on the sabbath-day through the corn, his Disciples being an hungred, began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat.* The Pharisees now thought that they had caught them all at a mighty advantage, and surpris'd in the very fact of profaning the *Sabbath*, upon their *eating* (as it must be supposed, * there was the violation) before the usual hour on that day: they came open-mouthed upon him, and *cried out, Behold thy Disciples do, that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath-day*: with profound respect to their sabbath, he first quoted scripture-authority, in two instances, to avouch for what was then done: and then put their learned heads and scrupulous consciences upon that old maxim of their religion, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice.* They were silenced and baffled for the present, but little the better for it; they soon again fell to their old vexatious queries. Ver. 10. *Behold there was a man which had his hand withered; and they asked him saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? That they might accuse him*: as tho' they had not only lost humanity, but common natural instinct and bowels: *What man shall there be, says he, amongst you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lift it out? How much more is a man better than a sheep?* (themselves excepted, but withal barring innocence in the comparison) *Wherefore it is lawful to do*

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* Vide Dr. Hammond.

well on the sabbath-days. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand; and he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole like the other.

Here was little labour in the whole operation and no breach of *rest* on the *Sabbath*: the man *stretched forth his hand*, and in the same instant the Almighty healer and Saviour *restored it whole* as the other. But had it took up the whole day, it had been better spent, than ever any sabbath since its first institution by the whole race of *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, those originals of cheat and hypocrisy; as much as it is better to *save than to kill*; as our Lord told them on the like occasion; and as much as *mercy is better than sacrifice*. Alas! he was never an enemy to their *Sabbath*, only so much a friend to them that he would have led them out of that blindness and dotage, by which they stupidly mistook, in the first rudiments of their religion, one of their *ten commandments*; for tho' rest was primarily enjoined; yet could they imagine, that God intended a privative sanctity, to worship him by doing nothing? Or that any day by all the sanctions of heaven could be so separated to the service of God, as that actions of humanity, of true honour and honesty, of publick good and defence of one's country, of preservation or restoration of life; in a word, of charity and doing good in any relation whatsoever, must be suspended, or not allowed to be done within the compass of that time? Why! these are the acts and exercises of serving and pleasing God, and can never be superseded by the holiness of the day, but do more highly sanctify it.

This horrid superstition and infatuation of the
Jews,

Jews, became the greatest reproach of their nation and religion among the *Heathens*: they threw the scandal upon God himself according to the blasphemous Sarcasm of the Poet,---*Tanquam lassati mollis Imago Dei*. Charging their commandment for rest only (as they kept it) as an emblem of a *soft and lazy Deity*. *Jeremy* put it down among his Lamentations for *Jerusalem*, ch. i. v. 7. *When her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her, the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her Sabbaths*. As no expression fell from our Saviour's mouth in derogation to the righteous-substantial observance of the holy Sabbath, so no one act of his could be charged with the least violation or discountenancing of it. And as to his own example, he most constantly frequented their Assemblies and *Synagogues* on that day, promoting all religious exercises and offices. It is said of him, *Luke* iv. 16. that *He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and, as his custom was, he went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up to read, &c.* The Disciples and Apostles kept to the same usage and observance. *St. Paul*, as *his manner was*, is often said to frequent the *Synagogues*, to reason with the *Jews and Greeks every* * *Sabbath-day*.

And yet now the *christian Sabbath* began to dawn, which upon very good grounds was the *first day of the week*, though not by an express and positive command, yet by so many instances of *meeting and assembling* together, as they had done with their *Lord after his Resurrection*, and then

* *Act*. xvii. 2, xviii. 4.

then next for the *receiving the Holy Ghost*, and afterwards for *Prayer*, for the *Eucharist*, for their *collections for Charity*, and what related to their worship and the settlement of the *Church*, as you find in * divers places of the *New Testament*: which practice can amount to no less than to a sacred establishment, even a consecration of this day to their *great redemption* (of higher consideration than *redemption* from *Egyptian bondage*, or indeed the *creation of the world*;) It was undoubtedly meant on this day when St. *John* in his *Apocalypse*, Rev. i. 10. saith, *He was in the spirit on the Lord's-day*, universally interpreted to be this *first day*; *Gomarus* only excepted, who was a rigid follower of *Calvin*, and would allow no such exposition: and by the way, to shew how indifferent a *Sabbatarian* was that great man last mentioned; it is said, that he once in an *Assembly*, proposed the changing the *Lord's-day* from the *first* to the *fifth* day of the week: and in his † institutions he hath plainly declared, 'That those men that stand so strictly upon the morality of the *Sabbath*, do by a *gross and carnal Sabbatizing* three times out-go the superstition of the *Jews*;' *Crassâ carnalique Sabbatismi superstitione ter Judæos superant.*

But to proceed; The primitive christians continued the observation from Apostolick practice, and were so far from thinking a *Sabbath*, in its religious use, abolished with the ceremonies of the *Jewish* law, that for the *first and second centuries*, they kept *both* days, the *Jewish* and *Christian*

* *Act. xx. 7. 1 Cor. xvi. 2, &c.*

† *Calv. 2. Inst. c. 8. § 34. V. Hist. Archb. L— by H. W.*

stian Sabbaths; as rightly judging, that *Christians* ought rather to double than any ways lessen the time for religious worship: but as the *Jews* fell off from them, so their Sabbath fell on course, and the Christians kept wholly to the *Lord's-day*, the observation of which was soon confirm'd by an edict of *Constantine the Great*, and also by a *Canon* in the *Council of Laodicea*.

And so I need go no farther: the *Lord's-day* hath a very sacred and solid foundation from Apostolical and Primitive practice, from the reasonableness of the thing itself, that time should be set apart for the service of God, be sure as great a proportion under the gospel as under the law: and that the *first day* of the week should be that *Holy Sabbath*, that for reasons above-mentioned lays claim to the commemoration of all christians to the end of the world; therefore let it be entirely devoted to its own Lord. For,

III. *The son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day.*

The sense of which words will take up but little time to explain; though some have interpreted them of man in common: but our Lord is speaking of himself immediately before, v. 6. in a claim of higher pretensions in the esteem of the *Jews*: *I say unto you, In this place is one greater than the temple*: so that there can no doubt remain, but that Christ Jesus our Lord is this *Son of Man*, and then be sure as little that *He is Lord even of the Sabbath-day*. And who should be? but he that is the Lord of all things, the creator of heaven and earth, and the gover-

nour of the universe? who can be confined or circumscribed by no place or time, and can by no means be *subject to ordinances*, and ought not to be *judged* (as St. Paul would have no common man, Col. ii.) *in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath-days.*

He that was himself the substance and completion of the *law and the prophets*, could not be detain'd in bondage to the legal observances, *He is the Lord of the Sabbath-day*; to appropriate it to his own worship and service; to change the day, or utterly abolish it, if he had pleased, or sanctify every day to the same sacred uses. But whate'er is his power or dominion over the *Sabbath-day*, he altogether designs it for the use of man, for so he declares, Mar. ii. 27. *The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.* How strict soever the commandment may run, and how straight soever the *Pharisees* have made it; it must yield and bow to the preservation, to the well-being, to the necessities of mankind. As the *Lord of the Sabbath* hath thus ordained it to our use: in grateful return, let us take care to the religious observation of our *Lord's-day*, which hath so rightfully succeeded into the place of the *Jewish Sabbath*. Though we have cast off and exploded their superstition, and the ceremony be abolished; yet the substance remains: let us look to it, that we be not less righteous, holy, and devout on our *Lord's day*.

1. Let us give the primitive testimony of our honour to the *Lord's-day*, by resolute maintaining and *holding fast our profession*, by standing up in its defence, against all its enemies, if ever it should

should come to be in danger. The high glories and triumphs of our religion were consummated on *this Day*, and therefore was it an early injunction and practice of the church between the festivals of our Lord's *Resurrection*, and the *descent* of the Holy Ghost, to *stand up* in their assemblies, in all their devotions and religious exercises. And *Tertullian* mentions a Canon that enjoins the same throughout all the *Sundays* of the year, to denote by that erect posture the high tendency of our devotion to heaven, and also our courage in promoting and defending our most holy faith, for *Christ is risen from the dead, and stands by us at the right-hand of God*, and hath sent his Holy Spirit to animate and invigorate his Church, so that the *gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.

2. A cessation from temporal labours, and worldly concerns, is as much a christian obligation on the *Lord's-day*, as it was a *Jewish* one upon their *Sabbath*: God and *Mammon* must not divide this day, we cannot serve them together at any time; it must be a degree of sacrilege and defrauding of God, to take the world into a partnership with him on his own day.

But this cessation from work or business, is not to be spent in droneing idleness, lying longer in bed, or walking more abroad, on that day, or making impertinent visits, or any other such lingering ways of whiling out the time; much less in greater freedoms of merriments and sensual enjoyments, for downright work and honest labour are better than all these vain (and too often sinful) ways of mis-spending our *Lord's-day*. We have work enough upon our hands that relates

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to our religious concerns : we have more need to borrow a considerable portion from every common day, but by no means to diminish this, *It is the Lord's-day.*

3. A cessation not only from worldly business, but also from those pleasures and diversions and recreations which we call innocent, and may be within the bounds of christian liberty upon other days, must be obliging. If they were not allowed among the *Jews*, why should they be indulged in so mortifying a religion as that of *Christianity*? Is *Judaism* strictness in religion, and Christianity looseness and greater freedom? then in vain came our Lord *to fulfil the law of righteousness*, and we are far from *exceeding* that of the *Scribes and Pharisees*.

A *Jewish* superstition and preciseness either in opinion or practice relating to a Sabbath, is, no doubt of it, a great error, and to be avoided. But where we meet with one man carried towards that extreme in his observance of the Lord's-day, we find thousands, that have either a very slight opinion of it, or dare venture to spend it, in greater looseness than common diversions; and 'tis to be feared, more sin is committed on that day, than on all the days of the week. So there can be no danger in pressing the very strict observance of the *Lord's-day*; especially when we consider what in all likelihood would be the contrary event; that is, should the Lord's-day be thrown as common and undistinguished amongst the other days of the week, there would soon and sensibly be but little face and appearance of religion and piety among us, and moral virtue
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and honesty would quickly follow in a visible decay.

4. Lastly, There can be no less then, than an entire devotion of the *whole day* to the worship and service of God. It is the *Lord's-day*, let him solely preside and rule over it: he hath fairly allowed for preservation of life, for all works of charity and humanity; we cannot better serve him upon his own day, than by such moral acts of goodness: and he hath allowed too for our necessities and all reasonable conveniencies, because he will still have his *Sabbath* subservient to our well-being; but let us not defraud him of the rest upon trivial pretences.

Lassitude and weariness in devotion is often pretended, and so intermissions are pleaded for; but we seldom complain of it in our pleasures, and if we should, we find ways to vary and change for our refreshment and greater delectation; nay, in our business we seldom make any such complaint, tho' sometimes very toilsome, if there be good income to keep up our spirits: why is religion that hath the prospect of heaven round about it, such a tedious piece of work? If variety will please us, let it be in the several exercises and changes and stations of our devotions; from our closets to the publick assemblies, from prayers to praises, from reading or hearing the word of God, to pious meditations upon that and upon all the numerous and most delectable objects and subjects of divine contemplation. If possibly we can, let not an action be done, let not a thought steal in, nor a word steal out, that are not genuine to the holiness of the day. Let
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all spaces of time be filled up with some pious exercises.

And let our own examples and seasonable instructions on this day scatter their happy influences over all that are about us. As the charge in the commandment runs, not only over *children* and *servants*, but also over *strangers*; that is, such as bear a remoter relation to us, but are within the reach of care and authority, with all the command and power we have; let us *remember* that it is our parts and duties to see to it, that they also *keep holy* our *Christian Sabbath*. So that we cannot want *work* even on this day of *rest*, (but not of idleness) charity will supply us with an infinite variety. Insufficient indeed is the day for the duties thereof; we want rather to take in more, could we spare them from our worldly necessities.

But let not one day pass away, upon our perils, without giving him a share, who gives us life, and is truly Lord of every day; oh! then that we could live to him every day, as tho' it were consecrated to his service, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and ascended up into heaven to make continual intercession for us at the right hand of the Father, to divert his everlasting wrath from us: who sent down as at this time upon the Disciples and Apostles the *Holy Spirit* with an almighty working power to confirm and establish our religion; and will continue his divine assistances to his Church and the faithful members thereof to the end of the world: and with all hath left us a promise of *entering into his rest*, *σαββατισμὸς*, Heb. iv. that eternal sabbath

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sabbath or *rest* that *remaineth to the people of God*: To which state of everlasting peace and bliss, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost bring us all in his appointed time: To whom be ascribed, all Honour, Majesty and Adoration now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXIV.

SION preferred.

PSALM LXXXVII. 2.

The Lord loveth the gates of Sion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

THE exposition of this *Text* will be easy to all that shall consider the acception of the word *Sion* in this and most other places of Scripture, where it is to be found. We meet with it under many characters and descriptions, but what is sacred and appropriate to the worship of God is denoted by them. *The place which the Lord hath founded; his dwelling place which he hath chosen*, which he hath desired for his habitation. And he himself is pleased to bear a title of honour from this seat, or great mansion house, the place of his especial residence. *Ye shall know that I am the Lord*

your God dwelling in Sion, my holy mountain. And the place of the Lord of hosts is mount Sion, the city of the Lord; the Sion of the holy one of Israel *. And then again more extensively, for its use, excellency, beauty, and duration: *Out of Sion shall go forth the law, the perfection of beauty; beautiful in situation. The joy of the whole earth is mount Sion, which cannot be removed, but standeth fast for ever. The salvation of Israel shall come out of Sion: or I will place salvation in Sion for Israel my glory, and from thence shall be deliverance. From thence (as St. Paul quotes the prophecy) shall come the deliverer, and shall turn ungodliness from Jacob* †. Many of which *Texts* do literally relate to the separate *holy place* of God's worship, and his preference of it to all others that are common. And the rest figuratively or typically, under the name of *Sion*, are to be referred to his *Holy Church*, the Society of his Saints and elect knit together in one communion and fellowship, more especially relating to its future estate under the *Messias*.

In a word, all of them denote the peculiarity of divine favour and designation, before all other communities that wander out of its borders, and have evil will against *Sion*. The words of the text will comport with both senses, and from them we may infer,

- I. God's preference of such places, as by his appointment, or by pious dedications have been

* Psal. lxxxvii. 1. Isa. xiv. 32. Psal. ix. 11. lxxvi. 2. cxxxii. 13. Joel iii. 17. Isa. xviii. 7. lx. 14. &c.

† Isa. ii. 3. Mic. iv. 2. Obad. xvii. Isa. xlvi. 13. Rom. xi. 26. out of Isaiah lix. 20.

been separated and set apart for the performance of religious worship. *The Lord loveth the Gates of Sion.*

II. That God's choice ought to be ours, and that to be manifested by our frequent attendance upon his service at the *Gates of Sion*, in these consecrated places, and our most solemn and devout behaviour in them.

I. We are to maintain God's preference of such peculiar places dedicated to his service, to all others that are common and for worldly uses.

We have too many texts of scripture to be reckoned up at this time, denoting God's especial choice of this place for his worship; the only one at that time he had appointed in the world.

For though the whole land of *Palestine* was called *Holy*; and *Jerusalem* above that more signally the *Holy City*: yet to *Sion* an higher degree of that relative holiness was always ascribed. And though called too *the city of the Solemnities*, Isa. xxxiii. 20. and at *Solomon's* dedication of the temple, called the *City of David*, 1 Kings viii. yet it did not take in the whole city, but was a narrower district of *Jerusalem*, or *Intima Civitas*, as it hath been usually called, compassed with another wall; wherein was the royal palace of *David*, and afterwards the *Temple*, into which the *Ark of the Covenant* was translated: as also there the *Priests* and *Levites* were instructed and brought up for the service of the temple, and there they offered their sacrifices,

and performed their other *Holy Duties* according to the law.

This was the *holy place* and *temple*, the *very gates* of which the *Lord loved more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, either those that were in the other parts of the city, or amongst the other tribes throughout the holy land. For *he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh; the tent which he placed among men. Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Sion which he loved.* Psal. lxxviii. 60. 67, 68.

Now as it is abundantly apparent throughout the whole *Old Testament*, without exceptions, (which were often made against their sacrifices, vain oblations, and other ceremonial observances, and even their very Sabbaths when formally celebrated) that God did ever manifest his preference of this holy place to all others; and also enjoin the most solemn and sacred respect to it, that divine consecration could make it capable of; and the *first Temple* being destroyed, another must be erected, as absolutely necessary for divine worship, and that not destroyed, till the whole *Jewish* œconomy came to a dissolution: So under the Christian Church may it, with abundant authority, from the practice of the primitive Christians, and the reason of the thing itself, be made good, That places have been separated and consecrated for the use of religious Assemblies.

It was a prophecy concerning *Sion*, Isa. ii. 2, 3. and the same, Mic. iv. 1, 2. *That it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of*

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the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills: And all nations shall flow unto it: And many people shall go and say, Come let us go up into the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Which surely is not to be understood of that particular place, which was to be forsaken, according to his (Isaiah's) prophesy in the foregoing chapter, and so signally came to pass; nor of that particular mountain, inconsiderable for its height, and yet exalted, *ac si foret Olympo celsior* (as Calvin notes upon the place) above the highest mountains in the world; but that in the last days (which are always interpreted the times of the *Messias*) thence should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord, so long confin'd and shut up into one place, and should dilate itself over all the nations, upon which there would be a necessity of a great number of sacred places, or many *Mount Sions*, that the people of God from all quarters may flow unto them, and assemble together, saying, Come, let us go up into the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways.

And to this agreeth that of Malachi i. 11. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering: For my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts. Both which prophecies not only de-

note the larger extent of the Gospel beyond the Law; but also that besides *Mount Sion*, or when that is become desolate, his residence should be peculiar in innumerable other places, and his worship celebrated.

And hence we have an easy solution of all those objections which can arise from that Discourse betwixt our Saviour and the woman of *Samaria*, John iv. 20. upon the schism betwixt the *Jews* and the *Samaritans*. The woman started a question, which of the two places had the right of worship, *Shiloh* on mount *Ephraim* in *Jerizim*, where the *Tabernacle* was first pitched; or *Sion* on mount *Moriak* in *Jerusalem*. To which Jesus answered, *Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father; but the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him*: plainly intimating two alterations; the one from gross and carnal ordinances, to a pure and spiritual worship; the other from a confinement to one or two places only, to an enlargement over all nations; and the former doth no way exclude the latter: for tho' we worship God spiritually, yet we cannot do that without the circumstances of time and place; and surely the dedication of both to such a sacred use cannot make the service less refin'd or spiritualized.

Was there ever any dislike or disregard shewed by our Lord in all his abode upon the earth to the Temple, or any forbidding expression that could relate to consecrated places, that should in times to come bear that name, or be separated

rated for sacred uses. He frequented the Temple with solemn devotion, from his youth, when he was but twelve years of age: and when he came to the years of his ministry, it is said that *he taught daily in the Temple*; and upon his being apprehended, he challenges his enemies to disprove him. *Luke xxii. 53.* Indeed he had prophesied of its ruin, that *one stone should not be left upon another*, but thereby denoting the greatest calamity that could befall them.

At his arraignment nothing could be laid to his charge of lessening its honour, and they would have wish'd nothing more, only when they were put to their shifts for witnesses, two perjur'd wretches came in, and said, *This fellow said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and build it in three days.* *Mat. xxvi. 60, 61.* But the words were spoken of the temple of his body, as you read *John ii. 19, 21.* and if it had been of the temple itself, it seems he was for building it up again.

But one zealous and pious act will answer for all; observing their customary prophanations of the Temple, he strained even to the *Jus zelotarum* (a right that had been practised by the professed zealots) and *whipp'd the buyers and sellers out of the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers.* So justly was he incensed, and so great was the provocation: upon which the Disciples applied that of the Psalmist; *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.* His reprehension too in words was as severe as his blows: *It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves*.*

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* *Mat. xxi. 13. John ii. Isa. lvi. 7. Jer. ix. 11. Psal. lxxix. 9.*

As he thus shew'd especial honour to the Temple; and be sure the Temple receiv'd double honour at that time from the personal presence of the son of God, God and man; by which the prediction was exalted above *Solomon's Temple*, tho' inferior in external beauty and glory: So we find he honour'd their Synagogues too with his frequent attendance and presence, places separate and erected for the reading and expounding the law, where the *Scribes* bore rule, as the *Priests* did in the Temple.

Thus in respect to both places, (*John xviii. 19, 20.*) he vindicates himself, his Disciples and Doctrine, from private conventicling, before the High Priest; *I spake openly to the world, I ever taught in the Synagogues and in the Temple, whither the Jews alway resorted, and in secret have I said nothing.* And he shewed himself so averse to separation (if it could possibly have been avoided) that *Mat. xxiii.* at the three first verses, he spake *to the multitude* (usually giddy and apt to wander) *and also to his Disciples, saying, The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not ye after their works; for they say and do not:* enjoining a deference to them, in honour to their seat and office, as being both sacred, as well as to their doctrine.

Thus the holy Jesus, ever tender of his Father's honour, and bearing especial respect to all things consecrated to his service, neither by example, nor by any express order, hath left any express instance upon record to discountenance the reli-

gious use of select places for the exercise of his own purer and more spiritualiz'd worship.

And we find after his ascension, that the Disciples, and the whole Christian Church that then was, kept as close to the Temple and their Synagogues. *They continued with one accord in the temple*, saith St. Luke, *Act. ii. 46.* Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour, *Act. iii. 1.* Until the Jewish persecutions and open declarations against the doctrine of Christ obliged them to a *Non-communion*, and when it was time to go out from amongst them, they had first an ὑπερῶν or upper-room, called also *Cenaculum Sion*, which they separated from common or promiscuous uses: Where the Holy Ghost first descended upon them, (as Cyril bishop of Jerusalem testifieth, C. 16.) where they made their elections and ordinations, continued in prayers and supplications, and kept their first council upon that question, Whether the Gentiles that embraced the Christian faith were to be circumcised or not. This *Cenaculum* too, was not long after enclosed with a larger fabrick, called the Church of *Sion*, on the top whereof it stood, upon which St. Jerome applied these words of the Text: *Her foundations are in the holy mountains, the Lord loveth the gates of Sion, &c.*

Now it was in respect to this ὑπερῶν, and other sacred places, where the Apostles kept their synaxes or assemblies, that St. Paul gave that seasonable rebuke, *1 Cor. xi. 22.* *Have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the Church*

Church of God? Where it is plain the word ἐκκλησία denotes not the Assembly, but the Place set apart for sacred duties; and that from the opposition to οἰκίαι, their own houses, and from ver. 34. *If any man hunger, let him eat at home.* And to this interpretation the antient fathers have generally agreed, who best understood the practice of those times.

The zeal of the primitive Christians, even when they had the coldest encouragement from the world, did suggest to them, that as the divine Majesty was most sacred and incomunicable, so likewise it was an eminent part of the honour that was due to him, that he should be worshipped in such places that were not promiscuous and common, but appropriate and set a part to that end and purpose. And therefore they had their several oratories, their εὐμενεία and τόποι θησκέυσιμοι or worshipping places, usually erected in the cœmities of their martyrs, and this appears from the edict of *Dioclesian* * to demolish them *Hippolitus* that flourished and wrote in the third century, describes the prophaneness and degeneracy of the last times, or those of the Antichrist, by this characteristick blemish, οἱ Ναοὶ τῷ Θεῷ ὡς οἴκοι ἔσονται. The temples of God shall be as common and ordinary houses. -- But to proceed a little farther; these lesser places, sometimes hidden and obscure, but always select and sacred, served their turns, till authority did countenance and encourage their zeal, to erect more stately fabricks, and make more numerous dedications, and upon

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* *De consummatione mundi, seu de Antichristo.*

occasion convert the *Pagan* temples to the use of the gospel. To give an account of these, would be too large a subject, and to no purpose: To examine the unwarrantable superstition that attended some of their consecrations, will be needless enquiry. It is enough that in all ages of the Church (even in the three first centuries) * such places have been separated for the service of God, and preference given to them both by God and good men, according to that relative holiness we attribute to them, and a learned † prelate of our Church, tells us, “ That the primitive Christians were “ glad of heathen temples, to celebrate the “ Christian rites in them; and they made no “ other change, but that they ejected the De- “ vil, and invited their Lord into the posses- “ sion : ” And this he saith, proved very encouraging to the heathens to come in, when they saw their ancient places of worship were not violated. For instance, the *Pantheon* in *Rome*, that was dedicated to all the gods, or *Cybele*, the mother of the gods, might innocently enough, as well as properly after purification, be dedicated to the *Virgin Mary* and *all Saints* (as it was by *P. Boniface IV.*) if they had not made the resemblance too near, and turn’d those Saints too into certain gods and mediators.

But let us, in the *second* place, to these authorities add some arguments from reason: In order to which,

1st. We must acknowledge that the first notions

* Vid Mr. Mede, † Dr. Taylor’s Life of Christ, Pag. 330, 334.

tions of a God must necessarily infer, that a religious worship must be paid him suitable to his nature and essence, with all reverence and adoration: And the next thought must be, that this service should not be performed in any common or unseemly place, but in one peculiar and select, set apart for so sacred a purpose: For place is absolutely necessary for us that have bodies, tho' it cannot confine him that is a Spirit and an infinite Being. Now as that worship doth chiefly consist, in sending up praises unto, and imploring blessings down from our great Creator, and deprecating his judgments, whether by sacrifices, or by verbal deprecations; so if we have any trust in these holy duties, this conference with heaven must necessarily suppose God's vouchsafement of an especial presence, which reason tells us must consecrate the place: God declares it to *Moses*, *Put off thy shoes from off thy feet*, *Exod. iii. 5.* *For the place whereon thou standest is holy ground*; and that certainly, because of his extraordinary presence. Therefore separation of place hath been of earlier date than we have yet mentioned; voluntary and without divine prescription, even by the very dictates of nature, which put mankind upon religious worship.

Noah built an altar as soon as he came out of the ark. *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, wheresoever they pitched their tents, erected altars with their septs and enclosures, as *Mr. Mede** hath

* *Gen. xxvii. 19. Ec. Vid. Mr. Mede, lib. 2. on Eccles. iii. 1.*
Ecc. xiii. 7.

hath observed, to shut them off from common places, without any special appointment from God. *Jacob* in particular vowed a place for divine worship, by the name of God's house, where he would pay the tithes of all that God should give him. And *Moses* himself before the ark and glorious tabernacle (that portable temple) were yet made, pitched a tabernacle for the same purpose without the camp, whither, every one that sought the Lord was to go. All this arose from a received custom and tradition of appropriating some peculiar place to divine worship, and esteeming it sacred: Nature instructing them, that the work was honour'd and dignified by the peculiarness of the place appointed for the same. And as we allow no nation to be without some knowledge of deity, and also some homage and worship towards him; so can we hardly find out any, where this peculiarity of place hath not been observed with reverence and distinction. So plain and universal are the dictates of nature in this matter.

2dly, As thus select and sacred places did not commence with the tabernacle, or the temple on mount *Sion*; so have we no reason to conclude, that they should fall or cease with the ceremonious parts of the *Jewish* law. For as sacrifices were many, but all types of that one all-sufficient sacrifice, by the blood of *Jesus Christ*; so the temple that was but one, may be a type of those many which the larger extent of the gospel would require. And as those shadows must vanish, because the substance

stance is come; for there is no use of them now; so that must be multiplied, because not only the number of worshippers is increased, but are also scattered over many nations far distant from mount *Sion*: And *place*, is as necessary for gospel-duties to be performed with order and unity, as 'twas for legal observances. And surely the purity of our most holy religion above the law, cannot make the place the less sacred.

3dly, We may farther argue, that tho' under the gospel our religion, from ceremonial, is refined into pure and spiritual, yet we are not ourselves refined into Angels: Our composition of soul and body still requires *time* and *place* for its operations. And tho' our Christianity be of that portable frame and constitution, that we may always carry it about us, and exercise it in the main duties at all times and in all places; yet if it be not kept up with publick solemnity too, it will be soon spiritualiz'd into a mere aerial holiness, or rather languish into a total desuetude: And where is then the Church of God? Every one may easily judge in this case, Christianity would make but a mean figure in the world, if it were left at large to every man, without a determinate time and place. And as to time, to name no other than the Lord's-day (holy in every good Christian's esteem) through all Ecclesiastical story, we have as early and full authority for the separation of one, as of the other, to sacred uses. And should the Lord's-day be thrown undistinguished among the common days

days of the week, and not kept up by the strict injunctions of Church and State, and the publick exercises and duties peculiar to it, Christian religion would soon degenerate into a very great neglect, or perhaps a total disregard; and no doubt but in a very sensible measure, the same consequence would follow upon the throwing down the *walls of Sion*, which fence it off from the *common dwellings of Jacob*. But,

4thly, Whatsoever alterations of religion were consequent upon the coming of Christ, yet nothing of the glory and substance of it could be diminished. God is still the same, and Christ came not to *destroy*, but to *fulfil* the law: What is of absolute necessity to divine worship hath a firmer establishment. It was of old, *Solomon's* concession at the dedication of his temple (1 Kings viii. 27.) That *God whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, could not be shut up even into that glorious house he had erected*: Yet a temple was built for his reception, and his more immediate presence; we have not more sublime conceptions of his infinity under the gospel: What should forbid then, but that he should be still worshipped in the *beauty of holiness*, which was his sanctuary.

I have the longer insisted upon this subject (I fear not very edifying to some in these times) to lay the greater weight, and impress upon us our own obligations in reference to the preferable worship of God in these holy places: Which was the second general head I proposed to speak upon, *viz.*

II. That

II. That God's choice ought to be ours; and that to be manifested by our frequent attendance upon his service in these consecrated places, and our most solemn and devout behaviour in them.

The true worship of God is here performed, according to the prescript of his word, and the practice of his Church in her greatest purity; this, and the place must surely carry the preference, *for the Lord loveth the gates, &c.* It was ever believed, that God, tho' he filleth all places, doth vouchsafe to be eminently present in the Assemblies of those that worship him according to his will; in holy scripture called the *Shekinah*, or speciality of the divine presence: Now this perswasion, which surely all Christians have that come here to pray and praise, should raise in us the most earnest desires, at all opportunities, to enter into the courts of the Lord's house; for here we are conversing with God himself about our own most important affairs, relating to this world, and that which is to come. To be absent when we may be present, is a very venturous omission, and that which we will not be guilty of towards an earthly majesty: We must wait God's time, and 'twill be most unhappy to be out of the way, when the blessings are to be conferred and given forth. We should look upon it as the highest privilege upon earth, to have free and easy access to a sovereign prince: this we should esteem infinitely greater, if we did truly believe there is a God that *heareth prayer*, and that all flesh are allowed, even invited to come unto him.

Holy

Holy *David* was in perfect raptures upon this contemplation, Psal. lxxxiv. *How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. — Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee: for a day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

Family and closet devotions are indispensable duties, for the precept runs higher here than any throughout the whole Gospel, that we must *pray always*, without ceasing and without *fainting*: But let the publick exercises still carry the preference with you, for they do with God; he *rejoiceth in the congregations of his Saints*: Here it is our devotions bear up with united force toward heaven, and *take it, as 'twere, by violence*. There is no tumultuous petitioning of God, our cries are no disturbance to him, nor crowds of supplicants annoyance to his throne: *His eyes are ever* (even with delight and joy) *over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers*. Therefore hath the *Church* appointed stated days for extraordinary humiliations and thanksgivings; and stated hours every day for our ordinary course of assembling, that our prayers and praises may ascend in one volley (if I may be allow'd the expression) before the throne of God's grace: and he is never wearied with our importunities and acclamations.

Here it is too, if any where upon earth, that we enter into the *communion of Saints*, we have

no other exposition more rational and probable of that mysterious article of our Creed: If they do not meet us here, as the angels are said to do; yet according to both the hope and persuasion of very holy and orthodox Christians, they keep time with our devotions, and in their present state of bliss exercise and exert themselves in conjunction with their fellow Saints below, in carrying on, by all prayer and supplication with *thanksgiving*, the grand interest of the Church militant and triumphant.

This must be the most blessed communion for which these sacred places are assign'd with the *Holy Angels of God*, with the *glorious company of the Apostles*, with the *goodly fellowship of the Prophets*, with the *noble army of Martyrs*, and with the *Holy Church throughout the world*. It is good for us to be here, and Jesus Christ will be in the midst of us. To this high privilege the Apostle to the *Hebrews* is thought to allude, chap. xii. at the 22d and following verses, where he is distinguishing the gentle dispensations of the Gospel from the rigours of the law. *But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the general assembly of the first born, which are written in heaven; and to God the judge of all, and to the Spirits of just men made perfect, and unto Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.*

As the divine presence is thus august and glorious, so is it withall dreadful and tremendous: Let us have then grace, as the fore-mentioned Apostle concludes from those high privileges, whereby

whereby we may serve God acceptably *with reverence and godly fear*, when we enter into the *Gates of Sion*, we are to leave all that belongs to the world without doors. We have many inspectors, God and his Holy Angels, and we must look carefully to all our motions and inclinations and actions: Every thought and word in this place belongs to God, every humble bow and address should be directed to him: It is a certain prophanation, a degree of sacrilege, to rob him of them; and 'tis pity it should be ever thought a point of civility or good manners to make any avocations: no business must interfere here; no observations to be made of one another, to intercept and divert our attention, intention and devotion, tho' indeed the only testimony that some carry home, that they have been at Church.

Observe the *Wise man*, Eccles. v. 1. *Look to thy feet, when thou comest into the house of God, and be more ready to obey, than to offer the sacrifice of fools.* And indeed, the same foolish oblations often in our prayers are the greatest mockery to God; when we are indecent and regardless in our behaviour, trifling and whispering in every frivolous matter; when our eyes and our hearts are wandering and wantonizing another way; and we are addressing the dread Majesty of heaven and earth, without so much as looking up to him, or thinking on him.

This is to offer the *sacrifice of fools*; and offer it now unto thy governour: will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person? The comparison doth exactly set forth the folly: how foolish and

provoking must an address to an earthly Majesty be, when it is presented with ridiculous grimaces, and withal slight and disregard in our aspect, looking another way?

St. Paul, no friend to superstition, argues in a particular case for the strictest niceness of decorum and demeanour in holy *Assemblies*: And that *because of the Angels*: certainly a very good reason; for if they are all *ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation*, their chiefest employment must lye here; and if we behave ourselves with irreverence and contempt towards the messengers of God, instead of presenting our petitions before the throne of grace, they will carry informations against us, and instead of blessings bring down judgments upon us. But whatsoever opinion or persuasion we may have concerning their office and ministry; we cannot but firmly believe, whilst we come here to worship, that we ought to make a solemn appearance before an omniscient, all-seeing, and omnipotent God; a God that *searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins*, most infallibly discerneth betwixt sincerity and formality looketh into the depth of our affections and desires, and takes an unerring estimate of every petition that comes out of our mouths.

This consideration alone may be sufficient to strike our hearts with the greatest dread and profoundest reverence, that we may keep them up constantly intent upon that divine majesty we here come to adore. Then we may have great confidence towards God in the performance of these holy duties, which our humility and sincerity, our hearti-

heartiness and integrity, with a serious and devout deportment will make most acceptable to him: And this trust shall secure to us all such blessings that God shall judge convenient for us, which are always the best, and shall support us and comfort us under all the evils and difficulties of the world: It hath the same duration and firm establishment with *Sion* itself, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail; for they *that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion, which cannot be removed, but standeth fast for ever.*

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON XXXV.

Preached at *Christ-Church Cant.* on *St. Matthias Day.*

Of Superstition.

ACTS XVII. 22.

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

SUPERSTITION, here charged upon the Athenians, is a word of reproach, we all know, commonly thrown about among Christians from one party to another. And truly

as it was cast upon the men of *Athens*, it is no doubt a great delinquency in religion, and must derogate much from the reasonableness and authority of its constitution. Yet by the way, we cannot but observe the moderation and candour of St. *Paul* in this his censure, who when he came to *Athens*, Καλιδωλον τὴν πόλιν, a city that was the very source of idolatry, yet he only admonishes them in gentle language, ὡς δεισιδαιμονεῖς, as somewhat (more than ordinary) given to superstition. By which, as we are taught, not to brand all deviations from us in religious worship with the gross and scandalous name of idolatry; so consequently as to superstition, not to cast the ignominy of that appellation upon every religious practice that is more than ordinarily solemn and devout; design'd for decency and order, and to denote reverence and honour in the worship of God.

Therefore both in order to charity, and better information, it may not be fruitless, or an unsuitable subject in this place, to enquire into the several senses and acceptions of this frightful name, this *Phantom* and scaring apparition, which men commonly call *superstition*. And then by easy application we shall discover where the malignity of the accusation will fall. For as *Atheism* and prophaneness on the one hand, or idolatry on the other, will destroy true religion, root and branch; so superstition founded upon false and undue apprehensions can be no true medium, but will cast so much sullage and foulness upon the profession, as will be apt to make Wisemen to nauseate and detest it.

Let

Let us therefore learn to distinguish :

1. If we take the notion of *Superstition*, according to a very old and usual acceptation, for a due tho' too solicitous a fear and reverence of the object of our worship, or for religion itself; the objection then will not be opprobrious. So *Festus* calls the religion of the *Jews*, or that new one of *St. Paul* (for in either sense it may be taken) their peculiar *Superstition*, Acts xxv. 19. where he is stating *St. Paul's* case before *Agrippa*, and founds the accusation charged against him *περὶ τῆς ἰδίας Δεισιδαιμονίας*, relating to their or his *Superstition*, meaning religion; for he speaks not in anger or with reproach.

Nay, the *Epicureans* called all religion by this name, dividing the whole world (except themselves) into *ἄθεοι* and *Δεισιδαιμονεῖς*, i. e. *Atheists* and the *Superstitious*. The first, such as believed no God at all; and the others, who not only acknowledg'd his Being, but also believ'd (what the *Epicureans* denied) his providence and government over the world; and because they saw, that That was not dispensed here below according to the exactest rules of justice (as they pretended to judge) in respect to the virtuous and to the wicked, they concluded there must be future rewards and punishments in another world, where this present inequality should be compensated, adjusted and made up. And hereupon they fell to worshiping, to implore the goodness and protection of those supreme powers they acknowledged, and to deprecate their displeasure and the execution of their vengeance.

Which devotion they ridiculed and reproached

with the name of *Superstition*, as arising from a groundless fear and dread of that sovereign Being, whose excellency and happiness they had fixed in a perfect ignorance or utter disregard of the actions of men.

Here certainly *Superstition* carries the preference to the professions and practices of the other Sects; and we may more safely venture our souls with the Superstitious, who believed a God and his providence, than with the Philosophers, who, if they believed the former, denied the latter, and in effect renounced both.

2. Altho' *Superstition* was the general charge upon all that had any religion, as extorted from them by unnecessary fears; yet these Philosophers fixed the accusation upon a certain opinion and apprehension (which must enhance their fears) that the heathen worshippers were possessed with, concerning the unaccountable severity of those supreme invisible powers: the *Superstitious* (as they upbraided them with the name) looking upon their Gods ὡς περ τῆς τυραννέας, as so many tyrants, ὡς περ Δαίμονας, as so many furies: All vengeance or rigour of justice, (as they rightly enough thought man may deserve no better) and little or nothing of goodness and compassion, to palliate and abate for human infirmities.

This is the blackest *Superstition*, and must necessarily make up the most melancholick and comfortless religion: none at all must be more grateful to heaven; and a worship void of true love and honour and due reverence to God (as it must necessarily be under these apprehensions) must be as provoking as the grossest idolatry: It is such,

as we have read *Indians* pay to the *Devil* thro' fear, and he deals with them accordingly: But the true God attracts our obedience and devotion by his clemency and goodness, by shewing mercy and loving kindness: And severity is as 'twere extorted from him by our provocations, and for our necessary amendment.

This imputation of Superstition, can by no means be fastened upon our profession; nay, it is a contradiction to the very foundation of Christian religion, where grace and mercy are the chief ingredients in the constitution, in the covenant God established with man: And if we can distinguish in infinities, the attributes of justice, and power of punishing, do seem to vail to those of goodness and forgiveness and shewing mercy. And hence we have the best incitement to a well stated devotion, grounded upon both love and fear, according to that of the Psalmist; *There is forgiveness with thee, O God, that thou mayst be feared*, Psalm cxxx. 4.

If any amongst us be infected with this hard-natur'd and splenetick sort of *superstition*, it will fall to their lot notoriously, who are so apt to charge it upon others. Witness the doctrines of reprobation, the *absolutum decretum*, their sentiments of God's eternal decrees, which (according to the sense of the fore-mentioned Philosophers) will make him unaccountably tyrannical to the greatest part of mankind, and indeed just to no man whom they condemn.

For if an absolute and immutable sentence be passed from all eternity, or at the beginning

ning of the creation, just before or at the fall, (for so their opinions divide) that far the greatest numbers of men shall fall short of salvation, and shall be damn'd to infinite and everlasting torments, for not obeying a law, which it was impossible for them to do, because fast bound down by a fatal decree; then the imputation of unrighteousness must fall upon God himself (which is the highest blasphemy that can be uttered) and man is made guilty by an irresistible force, which in equity and a true sense must make him innocent.

I have read of a parallel instance given in this case, which so much exposes this ill-natur'd doctrine, that if they do but examine the unavoidable consequences of that desperate position, they will never be able to shew the least material difference betwixt that rigid severity, they most blasphemously attribute to a good God, and that inhuman piece of cruelty *Tacitus*, in his 5th book of his *Annals*, relates of the tyrant *Tiberius*: who first resolutely (*i. e.* in his secret will) designed the death of a young innocent and virtuous daughter of *Sejanus*, and that *supplicio triumvirati*; a punishment severe and scandalous, which never by law could be inflicted upon a virgin; to make her therefore guilty, and so liable to the death he had decreed, he commands the executioner first to commit the rape, to deflower her (*a carnifice laqueum juxta compressum*) and then to do his office.

First, here is an irrevocable sentence of condemnation, a certain *supralapsarian decree*, afterwards

terwards the capital crime, and that by an irresistible force upon the will, and then comes the punishment. Certainly the most unaccountable proceedings of justice that ever could be framed: We must have nothing to do with this sort of *superstition*. How men should be frightened into this perswasion in religion towards God, is very unaccountable, because it must be the greatest absurdity, to pray or worship any manner of way, when all things are absolutely determined by an irreversible destiny. But farther,

3. If we ground our notion of superstition upon the original signification of both the words, either *Δαιμόνισμός* * in the *Greek*, the worship of *Demons* or deceased *Heroes*, or in the *Latin*, *superstitum cultus*, the worship too of *Saints* and worthies that are dead, but still surviving or alive in the memories of their votaries; it belongs notoriously to the heathens; and by just application to the Church of *Rome*; in both proceeding from a causeless and most vainly superstitious fear, that the Majesty of heaven will not, or cares not to hear and answer the prayers and addresses of despicable mortals, without such noble intercessors that are nearest his throne and favour.

Festus in stating *St. Paul's* case (as before) to king *Agrippa*, is thought to intimate this notion, *πρὸς τὴν ἰδίαν Δαιμόνισμους, καὶ πρὸς τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ἱερεῖς*, acquainting him, that their contest was about *their superstition*, and of *one Jesus that was dead*, whom *Paul* affirmed to be alive, putting *Christ*, as *Mr. Mede* observes,

* *Vid.* *Mr. Mede's Apostacy of the later Times, Chap. 6.*

under the vulgar notion of a *Daimon*; as *Celsus in Origen. (lib. 8.)* calls him by that name, *i. e.* the Christians *Dæmon*, not in the vulgar acception of the word, but in the Heathen notion of a *mortal deified*. But *St. Paul* knew him to be God and man, and the only mediator betwixt God and man, that had the sole interest in the court of heaven; and no pretended intercessors could find favour there, but through his name and merits: Therefore he boldly stood up in the *Areopagus* against all the Philosophers and *Wise-men*, in the defence of his religion; tho' that court of judicature, had prov'd a very severe inquisition upon some of their famous men*, who maintain'd the best of heathen principles; and more fatal upon *Socrates*, for broaching novel opinions, in derogation to their numerous gods, and *blind superstition*.

But to him (*St. Paul*) it prov'd not fatal, having over-powered them with such evidences of the true God, that in effect quite erased the inscription upon the altar to the *unknown One*: And made such a discovery of a Saviour and Mediator, even that man whom God *had ordained to judge the world in righteousness, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead,* ver. 31. So that all the crowd of their inferiour deities and daimons (as they had the most of any people, and ever ready to receive more) must in their memories, as their images, be cast into rubbish. You may judge of the prevalence of his reasonings, for they fairly dismissed him, tho' they

* *Anaxagoras, Diagoras, Protagoras.*

they had sacrificed others, and he departed from among them; and *Dionysius* one of their judges, and others of note and quality *clave unto him*.

Another instance of the rankest superstition, is, to make application to such puny intercessors, when the arms of infinite Majesty are stretched out all the day long to embrace us; to fancy that the crowds of mortal petitioners can give disturbance to that God, who every instant hears and looks through the universe; or to imagine our prayers shall come so thick upon him, or be so earnest and devout as to be troublesome, offensive and clamorous in his ears by their importunities.

It was the most wretched superstition in the heathens, to imagine their deceased heroes, *Kαλαρόνιοι Δαίμονες*, those blustering Saints (sons of the earth) that had performed some great and notable exploits amongst them, could be serviceable in the conveyance of blessings, or diverting judgments, from that supreme power, who can be no such being at all as a God, if he cannot save and destroy, or direct his unerring justice and goodness, without the intervention of such solicitors.

And more idle and brutish must be the superstition of the Church of *Rome*, that professes Christianity, to substitute a pack of Saints (some of them of no better repute than those of the heathens) into the same office. But worse still to rely upon them for merits, and to help out the satisfaction of an all-sufficient Saviour.

Certainly 'tis the highest extravagancy of superstition

perstition and delusion (beside the ingratitude) to believe in a Redeemer, that for that end was the Son of God most high *made manifest in the flesh*, that his satisfaction for the sins of the world might be of infinite value and extent, and yet to fancy the droppings of mortals, whom they have canonized, to be necessary to fill up the boundless ocean of his merits.

But this charge will not exclude a pious and respectful commemoration (according to the practice of our Church, from purest and most primitive devotion) of holy men, whose lives and actions are upon sacred record : This cannot be esteemed superstition, but a substantial and rational part of divine worship ; to bless God for such eminent examples of virtue and holiness, for such blessed and happy instruments by whom the doctrines of divine revelation have been conveyed and propagated thro' the world.

There is no Disciple or Apostle (excepting the traitor *Judas*, of whose transgression and fate you just now heard) that have deserved so ill of us, but we may afford him a day to contemplate upon the graces he was endowed with, and to learn and put in practice the more peculiar doctrines and precepts we have received from him. Under peril of idolatry and grossest superstition no devotion is to be paid them, no sacrifices done, no prayers to be made unto them : But to have a lively remembrance of them in our hearts, and their lives and conversations before our eyes, must be an incitement to piety and acceptable to God ; and a grateful memorial to them.

For

For tho' they can neither hear nor answer our prayers, yet as we believe the communion of Saints, so we may be assured they are our friends and well-wishers in heaven; that they have public joy upon the making of every convert upon earth, and so no doubt doth it contribute to their happiness that there should be daily *added to the Church of God such as should be saved.*

4. There is another very notorious instance of *superstition*, that must not be omitted at this time, which consisted in *sorcery* and *divination by lots*, by which they were deluded into a vain imagination, that they could discover all publick and private events, and fancied the deity so easy and trifling, as to lay open before-hand, all future purposes by such ludicrous decisions.

This is such ridiculous presumption upon heaven, that it needs not be confuted; and the history of it, as practised among the heathens, doth sufficiently expose the vanity and vile superstition. But we must exclude from this censure, such as were practised both under the Old and New Testament: *Sortes que temperantur a Domino*, ordered and inspected by the Lord, and so cast with justifiable indications of his will and allowance.

So *Jashua* by the command of God, pick'd out *Achan* by *lots*, as the great offender in the *accursed thing*, Josh. vii. So *Saul*, making an imprecation upon all that should, on the day he fought the *Philistins*, refresh themselves with any sustenance, found out *Jonathan* by *lots* to be the offender against his ordinance; but the Lord wrought his escape, and the people rescued

scued him from his father's sentence of death, 1 Sam. xiv. *Jonah* by lots was cast into the sea, as the true delinquent, the cause and occasion of the storm, in flying from the presence of the Lord : His punishment was from God, and so was his miraculous deliverance, and in order to both the Lord indeed *determined the lot*, *Jonah i.*

The exercise of the Priest's office was usually assigned *by lot*, as it is said of *Zacharias*, the father of *John the Baptist*, that *according to the Priest's office his lot was to burn incense, when he went into the temple of the Lord*, *Luke. i.*

But most free and clear of all appearance of an unwarrantable superstition, was the usage of *lots* by the *Disciples* in determining the apostleship upon *Matthias* (the Saint of this day) when they solemnly met together upon the election, and seriously with humble resignation to heaven, put up their prayers to the Lord, *who knew the hearts of all men*, to decide the point betwixt two very holy *Candidates* ; the preferable dignity of which they of themselves as yet were not able to determine. *Acts i. And they gave forth their lots : And the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles.*

In respect to all fortilegious decisions *Aquinas* * helps us to useful distinctions: he allows the use of *divisory lots* in dubious matters, when all parties are agreed ; for the dividing of land, sorting of inheritances, for determining of honours and the offices of magistrates ; and also for the inflicting of pains and penalties, where either the

* *D. Thom. 22da Quest. 95, Art. 8.*

the chief offenders are hard to be discovered or so numerous, as will make it too difficult or too rigid to punish all.

Consultory lots are very rarely clear of *Superstition*, and *divinatory* never; and to imagine that they are regulated by the influence of the stars, that he calls a *diabolical Superstition*.

There may be a *fault* in the use of any, in a four-fold respect, as he farther acquaints us. As

1. If we apply ourselves to *lots*, upon all occasions, without necessity, or when it may be other ways determined; this, he says, seems to be a certain tempting of God.

2. If upon a necessary case and occasion, we recur to *lots*, without a serious and solemn application to God, with an earnest desire of, and seeking after his determination, as the Apostles have given us a precedent in the election of St. *Matthias*.

3. If we consult and trouble the Oracles of God upon trivial matters, to gratify an ambitious or carnal or any foolish curiosity, as he gives an instance out of St. *Augustin*, of some vain and wickedly superstitious people (and yet professors of Christianity) that by dipping into the Holy Scriptures would calculate their fortunes by the texts they hit upon, and so substituted that sacred volume, even the dead letter, into the place of an *Heathen Oracle*.

4. He will not allow ordinary Ecclesiastical elections to be decided by *lots*, but by some better and surer indication of the spirit of God, both in the electors and those to be elected: telling us out of Ven. *Bede* upon the 1st. chap. of the

Acts of the Apostles, that the election of *Matthias* was an extraordinary case, and not to be imitated without great presumption: they were necessitated to make it by *lots* at that time; the Holy Ghost in fullness of power being not yet descended upon them; and it being required that the number of the *twelve* should be made up before the time of *Pentecost*: For afterwards we find the election of the *seven Deacons*, was not made by *lots*, but by the judgment of the Disciples, the spirit of God presiding over them. In fine, this great School-man utterly condemns, with an *Anathema* from the canons of the Church, as *dannably Superstitious*, all the magical practices of this nature, of old *Heathen Rome*, and other nations. Such as were their *Superstitious* observations and conclusions from frivolous occurrences, making every accident *σημειον τιδος* (as *Clement Alexandr.* speaks of those priests) betoken some strange matter that should come to pass. And before all melancholick fancies of the like nature will fall under the same condemnation. And then some that think themselves very clean from all manner of *Superstition*, will be found notoriously guilty in this relation: who assume to themselves the privilege of commenting upon providence, and always expound it on their own side; and according to their own splenetick inclinations it must act, or else it is not the hand of God.

From as trifling occurrences as the *picking* or *flight of birds*, or the view of the *entrails* of a *beast*, they are ever denouncing some dismal downfall to those they conceive their enemies, whether
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in Church or State: and if unhappily the evil light upon their own heads, Oh! then it is a tryal, a seasonable and friendly chastisement for the sins of *Israel*. So they often-times deal with the Holy Scriptures, wresting them (different from those of old) to their own favour, and the destruction of others: Whatsoever is prophetick on the right side, or true Church, that's their own; but whatsoever is against the *Heathen*, or *Jew*, or *Antichrist*, there they put the *lot* upon their adversaries, *i. e.* all parties that are not of their own stamp. As tho' that good book was therefore their great Oracle, to tell them their fortunes, or might be us'd as a book of *Lottery*, as it was by those vile pretenders to Christianity, but monsters of Superstition, we just now mentioned out of *St. Augustin*.

It is the foulest abuse of the Holy Scriptures, and a most odious instance of Superstition, to think them byass'd to parties, siding with malicious sentiments and peevish complaints, and engaging in modern quarrels, and dissensions; as tho' they were wholly calculated to right their cause and redress their grievances, which are altogether founded on their own passions and prejudices. How oft hath the Holy Ghost, and *St. John* in the *Apocalypse*, been traduced to these purposes? All that relates to the *Lamb* and his glories, his purity and innocence, they ascribe to themselves; and the *beast* and the *dragon*, *Abaddon* and the *bottomless pit*, must belong to their enemies. These, wherever they are to be charged, are ἐπ' ἐχθρούς καὶ μάστιγι καὶ θανάτῳ, *which* D d 2 the

the *heights of Vanity and Superstition*, to give them no worse a name.

5. But lastly, If Superstition is to be taken, in the most modern and vulgar sense, for standing strictly upon some outward formalities and significant ceremonies in religious worship, upon matters of decency and order, in expression or garb or posture, or in respect of an Holy day: he indeed may be justly blamed that uses them with such adherence, as to think them essential to his devotion, and places holiness in the stanch and formal performance: And is not he as Superstitious on the other hand, that flies from them with fright and horror, and shall think himself a Saint, and would be thought so by others, for that ridiculous and brutish abhorrence?

Here Superstition may lie on both sides the question, but certainly with great aggravation on that part, where there is an obstinate and forward singularity, besides a disobedience and dissent to the injunctions and practices of superiours; who must be allowed to be better judges than single persons, and must have no authority at all, if they cannot determine in indifferent matters. So there is a negative as well as positive Superstition; and if in themselves they are things indifferent, he is the Superstitious man, and in the worst sense, that dares not use them; for he takes away the indifferency, and makes them unlawful, tho' in their nature and use innocent. For the taking away the indifferency of any thing that is indifferent, is in truth Superstition, (says a great Casuist * and Prelate of our Church) whether of the

* Bishop Sanderson's Sermons, p. 64.

the two ways it be done, either by requiring it as necessary, or forbidding it as unlawful. And because the one or the other must be done or left undone; the authority of the Church or State ought to decide the point: and then too the original indifferency is not destroyed, only the act determined to that side that is most suitable to decency and order and a regular uniformity in practice. It was Superstition, in this negative sense, in infringing Christian liberty, by a causeless abstinency from things indifferent, which St. *Paul* in his writings so often labours to suppress.

Ceremony in religious worship hath usually been charged with Superstition, and yet is natural and unavoidable, so long as we carry human bodies and members about us: Could a man cast himself into a still posture, void of all motion and action, he would certainly make the most superstitious figure; however spiritualiz'd his devotion may seem, he himself must look like the dullest votary, and the very emblem of Superstition. Why must the body be excus'd from homage? When its organs act regularly, it is in conformity and subserviency to the soul, and may be of use in divine, as well as any other operations; according to the sense of *Calvin* * himself, who says: *Cui serviunt Ceremoniæ? Tanquam vel adminicula vel instrumenta, ut Corpus unà cum animâ in cultus divini professione exerceatur.* 'Of what use are ceremonies? Why! they serve as instruments or helps, by which the body together with the mind is exercised in the profession of divine worship.' An inward zeal is

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* *Calvin* Vol. VIII. p. 36. *De neces. reformanda Eccles.*

that which makes the worship most acceptable; but if our external parts also exert themselves in a due and decent manner, it must rather complete than diminish the service.

If inanimate beings and all living creatures are called upon to praise their Creator; why must man alone, of a body and make fit for address, and more obliged in gratitude to its most excellent artificer, be sullen, stiff, and inflexible?

It is a service congruous to our natures, manly and generous, becoming a body inhabited by a rational soul, when every part concurs in the devotion: As St. Paul may seem to allude, *Rom. xii. 1. I beseech ye, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* The objection of Superstition to such natural and solemn behaviour in divine worship, comes unluckily from those that are apt to fall into such an extreme of bodily action, that every impartial spectator must pronounce as the most superstitious aspect and spectacle.

Shall such then contort and wring their faces, bodies, voice and eyes, into all the perverse and unnatural forms and postures imaginable, and all to shew the eagerness of their unmannerly and clownish zeal? And must not we be allowed to bow to the blessed Jesus? Must not we pay homage to him sitting upon the throne of God, because they still rudely treat him as the Carpenter's son? Is our God a God of jealousy, and can we think he will bear with such flights and flurs in the performance of his service? Shall he except against a bullock or a lamb, for the imperfection of a limb,

limb, or the blemish or want of an eye (no material hurt or deficiency to a sacrifice that is to be slain and burnt); and can we imagine, he will not be as exact in requiring an entire conformity in every part of the man in paying a full and decent homage to him?

But to come to the matter of our devotion, which we ought to clear of all culpable Superstition. The imputation of it can by no means fall upon a composed *settled form*, or *liturgy*, because that is rational, regular and orderly; all deviations from it, or apprehensions of its unlawfulness are rather to be suspected.

It is the inward zeal and affection of the mind (as I have intimated already) that is the very essence of devotion: and surely then it must be very notorious Superstition, to fancy that That should not go along with good petitions pronounced out of a book, as well as with those that were never written. For it can proceed from nothing less than superstitious and unworthy conceptions of our great and wise God, to imagine him most taken with the variety of language (suppose there be also sense and coherence) and best pleased every day with a new dress and fashion for our prayers, but abominating the trite and common petitions and praises by book, tho' otherwise qualified with all the requisites of that holy duty: As if a *Jew*, that the altar might not be cloyed with the common oblations of sheep and oxen, or what others are prescribed by the law, should officiously presume to serve up his sacrifices with the great variety and delicacies of fish and fowl, or any other delicious meats, because more gustful to luxurious palates.

If any should farther plead in this case, that variety in prayer, is for the better actuating and inciting their own devotion; they unwarily give an undeniable proof, that that devotion cannot be genuine and solid, but is rather vain and extravagant, and only kept up by a mere ceremony; words in whatsoever form or manner delivered, being but the outward garb and mode of sense and meaning: so then to go on with the allusion, in relation to such *new-fashioned* prayers; if you will judge of ceremony and superstition by attire and outward cloathing, he that hath a modish dress for every day, will by no means be looked upon as so grave and wise a man, as he that keeps himself in a constant and decent garb: vain and foppish will be the name of the former, and that you must know will resemble the extravagances we are complaining of in religion; but sober and serious will be the just character of the latter.

But to hasten to an end: Having given you such an account of superstition, by which you may judge without my attempting a definition, what it is, and what it is not, in relation both to opinion and practice; I shall conclude with some few and easy rules, and cautions, in respect to any dangers that may arise from it.

1st. The superstitions of the Heathens, and such as are too like them in the Church of *Rome*, lie so gross, that they that judge by reason, and by scripture, by the whole frame and constitution of Christian religion, have conduct sufficient to keep them off from so much filth and corruption, in an exercise that ought to be the most serious,
refined

refined and prudential; clear of all that is foolish, and unworthy of God, the sole and sublime object of our adoration. But you must take notice, that

2^{dly}. All religious worship that is wholly spent in ceremony and formality, the *opus operatum*, without the devotion of the heart, and daily improvement in good life, is but a meer mass of superstition; and though it may be different in the acts, yet is the very same in nature with that we last mentioned. What is it not to adore Saints, and pray to Images, if we mock him whom we pretend to adore? do not offer him up the sacrifices of a broken spirit and a contrite heart; give him in our prayers the intenseness of our minds, and the ardency of our affections, and always honour him in the purity and holiness of our conversations? But,

3^{dly}. Though superstition is to be carefully avoided, yet take heed of being so much afraid of it, as to be in danger of falling into another extreme. For atheism and profaneness are apt to get the possession of that man, who hath abandoned all concern for religion, or flights the exercise of it either in private or publick; shews disrespect to things or places, or persons that are sacred, or ridicules all seriousness and strictness in devotion under the reproachful names of *superstition* and *credulity*. In respect to these, even superstition is an error on the right hand: if we should go to the poll, the *Atheists*, either in theory or practice, would be found a thousand to one to those that can by any account (I mean among ourselves) fall under the imputation of being superstitious.

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The *Atheists* of old, that are upon record, *i. e.* such as were professedly so, are not above three or four. And they were thought rather enemies to *Polytheism*, or the multitude of the Heathen gods, than deniers of one supreme being, but were branded with that name to expose them. But *Atheism* in our age (to our shame be it spoken) doth notoriously make a greater flourish: and the *Deists* (who are indeed but the reformed *Atheists* at best) in their number and desperate positions, out-do their predecessors the old *Epicureans* even now under so great revelation; so that the danger is infinitely greater towards this extreme, than towards that of superstition, which they have fixed in the opposite point.

4^{thly}. You must take notice, that there are a sort of rude people in the world, who censure all decent behaviour and good manners in the exercise, and in the places of divine worship, to be mere superstition: their notion is very unaccountable, as is their familiarity with God the supreme majesty of heaven and earth: how come the boldness and impudent acquaintance? I have only time to answer from the prophet *Malachy*, ch. ii. ver. 8. *Offer it now unto thy governour, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person, saith the Lord of Hosts?* most certainly he will not; but throw such vile pretenders, that make so bold with him, out of his doors. And is it not pity such varlets should ever enter those of the house of God, the *Gates of Sion*?

5. Lastly, As our religion is the most dreadful concern we have in the world, even that of everlasting life and everlasting death; so it calls for

for the utmost exertion of all the faculties both of our souls and bodies in the exercise of its duties : this can be no evil superstition. The body by fastings and mortifications, by all acts and tokens of humiliation must be made tractable and obedient. Intemperance is its ruin as to devotion, as well as health : the soul must be inflamed with the highest passions of love and fear, else our religion will be so enfeebled, that we shall never be able to run the race that is set before us, nor obtain the prize.

Fastings, and fasting days, especially those of Church-establishment, have been often charged with superstition by the people we last mentioned. Intemperance may keep up a certain sort of furious zeal for a party, in which some mens religion wholly consisteth ; but a pamper'd devotion can never be acceptable to God. *Israel* itself hath experienced it : *Jesurun waxed fat and kicked, then he forsook God that made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation*, Deut. xxxii. 15. Oh ! that there were no need of prescribing set times and days for our mortifications ; but that an habitual temperance and sobriety ran through the whole course of our lives : then we should be always upon our watch and guard and out of danger of a surprize.

Of old the original of all superstition was charged upon immoderate fear. Our religion is founded upon a well-assured faith and trust in the merits of an almighty redeemer, upon which we may *come boldly unto the throne* and hope to obtain mercy : But as strict conditions are required upon our parts, and the failure must be upon our everlasting

lasting peril ; so every moment we may justly fear and tremble, lest we should miscarry in the performance. Here we need not be afraid of superstition : Man is unhappily more subject to a forward courage, than timorousness in this case : And the bold adventurers, even in so tremendous a concern (as we may here observe again) are a vast majority to those few diffident timorous souls, who are daily working out their own salvation with fear and trembling ; so that the instances of despair, and too great fear are much rarer, than those of presumption and too careless a confidence. It is a certain truth we cannot love God in excess, there is no extreme of that virtue. And we make it as true, in effect or matter of fact, that we never fear him too much.

The wisdom of the world will not call that man a trifler, who is solicitous and punctual in the grand affairs of his present livelihood, that leaves no stone unturn'd, (as we are used to speak) neglects not the minutest circumstance, that may possibly and honestly be advantageous to the compassing a beneficial design or the diverting an evil that hangs over his head : This is but necessary care and discretion.

The wisdom then which is from above must surely justify that careful and no more than prudent piety, and clear it of all faulty superstition, that is punctual (even let it be nicely so) in every act of devotion, that dreads every appearance of evil, every start of sin in thought, word, and deed, and tempers our hopes with such daily apprehensions of God's displeasure, that we shall tremble to omit a duty, or slightly perform it ; but especially

cially not dare to hazard all upon a wilful transgression.

Let the Atheist and profane call this superstition, till they find their mistake with dread and horror. If we believe what we profess, we must acknowledge the interest of the next life to be infinitely superior to that of this; and then the wisdom of the children of light ought in all solicitous care and provision for eternity, to excel that of the *children of this world*, who are ever so punctually wise (as they would be thought) in their generation.

Let us then persevere in well-doing, let our devotion be unwearied; let us always have those apprehensions upon our souls, That our God is a God of justice as well as mercy, of vengeance as well as forbearance, and if we abuse the latter, we must unavoidably fall under the former, even to all eternity. Let us then not only love, but also fear the Lord our God, with all our hearts, with all our mind, with all our strength; that we may ever have an awe and dread upon our souls at every inclination and temptation to the least sin; and that we may be ever afraid of mis-carrying in the performance of any holy duty or precept commanded in the gospel; lest we should fail of the great end of our faith and hope, which is no less than a crown of everlasting peace and glory. Both love and fear are joined together in our holy *Litany*, with which petition we cannot better conclude than by praying, That it may please thee, O God, to give us an heart to love and dread thee, and diligently to live after thy commandments: We beseech thee to hear us good Lord.

Now to God, &c.

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SERMON XXXVI.

The Difficulty of Salvation.

1 Epist. of St. PETER IV. 18.

And if the righteous scarcely be saved; where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?

IN discoursing upon these words I shall consider;

I. The doctrine here asserted, by way of supposition; the very great difficulty of Salvation to the righteous, and the conclusive fate of ungodly and sinful men. And

II. I shall enquire into those difficulties, with which the righteous are beset, and endeavour to administer what relief I am able, in so deplorable tho' no desperate case. As to the First,

I. So many and great are the difficulties that encompass the righteous in their way towards heaven; so powerful the oppositions they must encounter from those most potent adversaries the world,

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world, the flesh, and the devil; so frequent are their despondences, reluctances, and relapses; so often do they go back the progress they have made, or are diverted another way; besides, what is most shocking, most repugnant to flesh and blood, so grievous and singular are the afflictions and persecutions, so pungent and searching the fiery tryals they meet with, in going thwart to the common road of mankind; that certainly a crown of glory, as it is a reward of exceeding weight and value, infinitely transcending all the merits that mortal man can possibly exert, and as far above the reach of his bare natural abilities, without mighty grace and divine assistance, so is attain'd on such severe terms, that, warranted by the testimony of Scripture, and conclusive from our own defective performance of conditions required on our parts, we may with safety (tho' with sadness) pronounce, that there are but few, in comparison to the vast shoals of those that miscarry and fall short, that enter into life, and they thro' the straightest and most difficult passage.

The *Old Testament* on many occasions, and in many instances, sets forth to us, either typically or expressly, this melancholick doctrine: the fewness of those, that called upon the name of the Lord, and how long a time it was, *Gen. iv. 26.* e'er they began: How inconsiderable a number were the sons of God, in comparison to the sons and daughters of men.

And when the world came to its fuller age and near its period (old enough to have been wiser) there were but eight just persons found worthy to be exempted from the common calamity and
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universal deluge : And after the restoration, we read but of one man, and his family for his sake, in a great and populous city, who was *Lot*, that merited a deliverance from one of God's highest judgments, immediate fire and vengeance from heaven.

Nay, upon the whole earth we hear but of one family, that of *Abraham*, that could make up a church of God ; and when the world was better stock'd, but of one single nation, that arose from him, that God could call his own, and they but an untoward people. And in their journey through the wilderness, which in innumerable instances and circumstances is the most exact and apposite type of ours towards the heavenly *Canaan*, two only and they scarcely, through vast and tedious difficulties, arrived at the land of promise ; the rest, of which the greatest numbers were the ungodly and sinners, perishing by the way. And after all God's mercies, in their new establishment, when they had lived through a whole age of miracles ; how frequent were their rebellions and apostacies ? How disobliging and vexatious were their hankerings after the filthy superstitions and idolatries of their neighbouring nations ? How common were their revoltings by whole congregations, and sometimes armies, from the best of governments, which was theocracy or the immediate government of God himself ?

And what poor forces had the Lord of hosts on his side, when in the time of *Elijah*, (so great a Prophet) but seven thousand in *Israel* (a swarming nation) were all the knees that had not bowed unto *Baal*, and all the mouths that had not kissed him ?

him? And that flock or brute of a God, that wanted so much careſſing, had no leſs then four hundred and fifty Prophets to attend him, and no doubt the multitude in proportion after them, when *Eljah* ſaid unto them, *I, even I only, remain a Prophet of the Lord.* Innumerable remarks do we meet with, thro' their whole hiſtory of the ſcarcity of good men, even among God's own people. An *Israelite* indeed, in whom was no guile at all, was ever a rare ſight; Chriſt took notice but of one; and as the land of *Paleſtine* is a very little ſpot of ground, in compariſon to the whole earth; ſo even of them that inhabited it, according to St. *Paul's* diſtinction, *they are not all Israel, which are of Israel,* Rom. ix. 6. The ſame Apoſtle, in this matter of the fewneſs of the true *Israelites*, refers himſelf to a Prophet who had well obſerved them: *Iſaias alſo cryeth concerning Israel: Though the number of the children of Israel be as the ſand of the ſea, a remnant ſhall be ſaved,* v. 27. But to proceed farther: Under the ſecond covenant, the bleſſed tidings of peace from heaven, and the joyful and more plentiful diſpenſations of God's grace and holy ſpirit, we have indeed the kingdom of God, more dilated and farther enlarged; and the power of ſatan more limited and reſtrained; the means of ſalvation more extenſive, our incitements are greater: and our promiſes larger, and more plainly annexed to every precept; yet ſtill the fleſh and the world retain their powers, and the devil his in ſecret, though not ſo openly: Still we are beſet with much the ſame difficulties in our paſſage; our aſcent to heaven is rough and toiliſome: Still ſtrait

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is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; and wide is the gate, and broad the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.

Although the coming of Christ be a most infinite blessing to mankind, proceeding from the infinite goodness of God, a reduction of the world out of darkness into most marvelous and comfortable light; whereas otherwise we had been in the gall of bitterness and under the bond of iniquity, we had in all likelihood been blind idolaters, and known no other Gods but what we could make ourselves, either the works of our own hands, or subjected to us by nature; Under such thick darkness and blindness, we should have been still seeking, but never finding our way; had not the glorious sunshine of the Gospel broke out upon us. And although again this immense blessing be extended far and wide, to the utmost ends and corners of the earth; so that the number of the elect must be much enlarged, since so many kingdoms of the world are now become the kingdoms of Christ, which before belonged to that of satan: And the church of God claims a title (so nearly relating to her supreme head) of *æcumenick* and *universal*, hath removed her landmarks to a far greater distance, and is no longer confined to the land of *Jewry*, or shut up within the walls of *Jerusalem*: And it is to be hoped, that not only her outward professors, but her true members (though invisible ones) are proportionably increased in their numbers; yet still notwithstanding *many are called, yet few are chosen*. The sound of the Gospel hath reached the ears of many,

ny, and no doubt in a great measure (so evident and well-attested are its truths) prevailed upon their reason and understandings : Yet a Gospel-conversation is still among the few, a remnant only. And the others must know more than Christ or his Disciples ever taught, who can discover any other way of salvation, but by living according to their Gospel.

So that Christendom would take up but a small portion of the earth, (perhaps less than that of the land of *Canaan*;) were only found and substantial believers, such as prove their faith by their works, admitted into it ; and if all prophane and blasphemous wretches, all hypocrites, vain-pretenders and deceivers, all partial votaries and furious zealots, all Hereticks and schismaticks, that must miscarry (tho' they commonly pretend the highest religion) and what others the enemy hath sown under the same common profession, were weeded or rooted out of Christ's Holy Church, and excluded that pure and uncorrupted communion of which the Saints only are the true members.

Christ is truly the only Saviour of the world, and were there thousands of sinful worlds, they could not surmount his all-expiating merits : his satisfaction is of infinite value, and his grace is all-sufficient ; and both have been freely and fairly, and we may say universally tender'd : but virtue and holiness have never yet been dispensed, nor can there be any dispensation from heaven, *i. e.* of faith, or outward profession, without works of righteousness ; *For God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.*

Where, where, then lies the default ? where is

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the deficiency ? but why, in demonstration should we make enquiry ! we need not charge it upon an absolute and fatal decree : it is our own election, it is our own reprobation : we need not fly to an insoluble mystery, when matter of fact stares in our faces.

According to the nature of a covenant, Christ Jesus can only be the Saviour of those that will embrace the terms of salvation, where they are proposed : we cannot believe, that he so far underwent the wrath of God on our account, to redeem those from it, who seem to have no desire, nor will be at any pains to avoid it : he came to call and invite, not to compel and force us to accept of salvation. To refuse and stand off, is such an affronting defiance, that it is impossible he should bestow it upon us ; and it is a very unwarrantable, even a provoking presumption, to imagine an everlasting crown of glory, and the highest happiness and enjoyment, should come on lower conditions than living up to the example and precepts of him that made the purchase for us.

Nay, hence damnation takes its force, and that most dreadful and tremendous sentence becomes the most just and equitable one : *This is the condemnation*, saith our Lord, *That light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* If that light doth not lead us to salvation, we cannot but see our own inevitable danger by it ; and that surely must make a frightful discovery. And more than once we are assured from him, that it will be more tolerable for heathens, the worst of them, that are in the most desperate estate of ignorance and vice,
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at the day of judgment, than for those that obstinately shut their eyes against this glorious light, or slight these gracious offers and means of salvation. Thus we make it entirely our own act, and we are the sole authors and finishers of our own damnation.

Now common observation will inform us, how great are the numbers of those that trample upon this most inestimable blessing, that thus lightly esteem the rock of their salvation: So many be sure as cannot raise themselves up to those strict and severe, but withall reasonable rules and precepts, and indispensable duties enjoin'd in the Gospel; on the observation of which, through the merits of our Lord and Saviour, depends our eternal happiness.

This is the covenant of grace; when the failure and misdemeanor lies on our parts, the obligation in course ceases on his. His veracity and infinite justice would be doubted of, and questioned, should he remit those conditions that are to make us like himself, and are of absolute necessity to qualify us for the kingdom of heaven; or should he bestow salvation on easier terms, than what he hath positively and immutably set down in his law or gospel, and eternally decreed as the means of salvation.

If we compare then the lives of the Christian world, with the precepts of the Christian religion, and consider how far the greatest numbers of those fall short in obedience to these; How few we see that give an outward testimony of their strict righteousness, and how many of those outward professors are deficient in sincerity and true holi-

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ness; we may justly fear, that the truly righteous are but a slender number, and their salvation difficult: And the desperate conclusion will be unavoidable, which the Apostle here suggests by way of question, of the sad and deplorable estate of the ungodly and sinners, which so visibly make up the greatest part of the world; *If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinners appear?*

I am sufficiently aware, that some commentators restrain these words more directly to the sad and lamentable desolation that was in a short time to befall the ungodly and obstinate *Jews*, who had so notoriously despised and crucified the Lord of life, in which calamity the righteous, or those converted to the Christian faith, were to go some share, but at last escape, though narrowly and scarcely, through many difficulties and hardships: But, as the predictions in the Gospel of our Lord's coming so soon in vengeance upon *Jerusalem*, and his general coming at the end of the world to judge the quick and the dead, are intermixed one with another; the first being the type and most dismal representation of the last; so these words, agreeing with other places of scripture of the like import, bear also a relation to our future and everlasting estate of life and death, and so are generally made use of, as I find them explained by an eminent, the most applauded preacher * of the last age: *If the righteous*, that is, 'If good men
' be saved with so much difficulty, and must
' through so many tribulations enter into the
' kingdom of God, what will become of all ungodly

* Dr. Tillotson, vol. 3. per Barker.

‘godly and impenitent sinners? where shall they appear? how shall they be able to stand the judgment of the great day?’

I am sensible too, that *ἐσθλὴ*, in many places of the *New Testament*, signifies temporal safety, and deliverance from impending evils and calamities here below, and not always eternal salvation only. Many too refer this Text, and others of the like sound and sense, to the difficulty of Christ’s precepts, then published to the *Jews*; that his laws were too strait, and their prejudices too strong; and therefore few were like to enter into his kingdom, as the gospel was then called, *Mat. iii. 2.* But this amounts but to the same meaning. If the means be difficult, the end will so much the more hardly be obtained: And as now much the same difficulties hold still, so it is wofully to be feared, that the greatest part of mankind will not get over them. And now I come,

II. To consider those difficulties apart, which I shall endeavour to comprehend under these three instances.

1. *The severe sufferings and afflictions that are the peculiar lot of righteous Christians.*
2. *The difficulty of Christ’s precepts in respect to our weaknesses, prejudices, and enemies.*
3. *The absolute and indispensable necessity, that they must be observ’d, in order to our salvation.*

And in the handling of each part I shall shew the reasonableness, that so transcendent a reward should be attain’d on no lower or easier terms; as also the encouragements we have to encounter the hardest difficulties, for the obtaining so great a prize.

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1. First, Of the severe sufferings and afflictions that are the usual lot of the righteous, which must obstruct the ease and pleasure of their journey towards their heavenly *Canaan*: And this single difficulty will be as much as I shall be able to get through at this time, and must therefore leave the others to another.

These words Εἰ δὲ Δίκαιος μόλις σώζεται, &c. are wholly quoted from the Septuagint, as is usual with the holy writers of the *New Testament*, out of *Proverbs* xi. 31. which the original and our translation from thence seem to express in a different sense: *Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner.* But if this compensation and reward relate to temporal punishments and due chastisements, then the sense of the words in both Texts will fall in one with the other. If the righteous have a portion of sufferings in this life, to punish them, in just reward and retribution for their lapses and miscarriages, and toward their amendment; and which are sometimes so severe upon them, that their escape is very hazardous; then how fearful must be the expectation of ungodly sinful men? whose sufferings in this world are inconsiderable, in proportion to their provocations; there must then be a greater reserve of judgments behind. And to this sense the words of my Text immediately relate; the Apostle being upon the subject of suffering in the cause and after the example of Christ, as appears by the context, in the verse preceding and that following the Text: *For the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it*
first

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first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?—Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing as to a faithful Creator. And these sufferings from the first establishment of Christianity were the determin'd lot, and assign'd inheritance of the righteous: they seem to be one of the first and absolute conditions in the covenant of salvation; for it is, if we suffer with him, that we are to reign with him. 2 Tim. ii 12.

There are many hardships here below which may severely put us to the test, but they will prove abundantly worth our while, if we can get through them; for *the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us: Rom. viii. 18.* they ought to surprize us: Let us consider and act like men of wisdom as well as courage and honour: no glorious attainments are made without some difficulties and hardships. And it is but reasonable, that sufferings (the resolute and patient bearing of which are truest testimonies of loyalty and fidelity, and surest tryals of all our virtues) should lie in the way to a crown of glory.

Our Saviour dealt so fairly with his followers, that he did in no wise sooth them up with any of those taking airy expectations of honours, riches or pleasures (the brutal, unfortunate mistake of the *Jews*) in the embracing of his religion: such enticements and allurements being rather the usual guile and cunning of Satan or some impostor. But upon all occasions he put them in mind of that dreadful portion of sufferings they must expect,
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more generously warning them before-hand of the unavoidable, even necessary difficulties they were to contest with, that they may fortify and inure themselves against the worst. And surely it was no common or easy enterprize they were to engage in, for men of that low rank, who must be dispirited from the meanness of their circumstances, to undertake the reformation and mending of the world; ever a thankless office: to tell men, and such as were grandees, to their faces, of their sins and hypocrisies, and that they were out both in their wisdom and religion, (their highest darling pretences to truth and holiness) and they were running head-long towards damnation, if they would not be rul'd by them: They could not expect but to be roughly handled in this so audacious an attempt: At once to fight against the whole world with only spiritual weapons of warfare, and against their own natural principles of self-preservation, was such heroicism in Fishermen, as surpasses all the enterprizes that ever were upon record. But persecutions and torments and death were the fatal unavoidable consequences of their pious zeal and courage, and tho' they gain'd their point in promoting the faith, yet were certain to fall in the cause. Their religion (which was their great atchievement) was to be established by their sufferings; but they themselves were to die for it, and therein became *more than* (common) *conquerours*.

So then as the enterprize was the most bold and daring that ever was engaged in, so the reward, (tho' death came between) did as far transcend all mortal prizes. *He that endured to*

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the end, should be saved, that is, immediately instated in eternal happiness: he that would not on any occasion or temptation deny or disown his Lord and Saviour before men in this world; should be assured that That great Lord and Saviour when he came to his kingdom and glory, would stand up for him and vindicate his cause before the throne of God: and that not only implies safety and deliverance from eternal torments, to which we are liable by sin, but also an advancement to immortal glory, to reign with him by virtue of having suffered with him.

Nay, the terms were very fair and encouraging, tho' desperate as to present security; *he that would save his life, should lose it*; and *he that should lose his life for the sake of Christ and his gospel, should find it*. They must have little sense of true honour, and little judgment in the value of rewards, who could not distinguish in this case, that a mortal and momentary life, which was never by philosophers and wisest men allow'd the name of true life, is a low prize, and may readily and gladly be thrown up, to obtain life everlasting.

But now much different and more gentle (I can't say so happy for high achievements) are the conditions in our times, when the promises and encouragements are as large, and the difficulties and obstructions far more smooth and even. Christianity was then a capital crime, look'd upon as a dangerous innovation upon the government, a treasonable pretence against the state, and the religion (such as it was) establish'd by law; but now is but what by civil laws we are bound to profess, and are rather encourag'd in the true practice of it by publick authority. How

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How much more tolerable will it then be for those that cowardly gave out and yeilded in times of persecution, than for many of us, who are as great backsliders from the faith we profess, and the resolutions and engagements we have made, when our natural principles are no ways put upon any stress or struggle; when no base submissions are extorted from us, who under the very sun-shine of the gospel are inactive and benumb'd, as cold in our profession, as though we were to meet with the sharpest usages, the most disheartening discouragements and oppositions.

We are without excuse; the principles of Christianity no longer counter or contend with those of present interest: our profession stands us in no costs or charges either of our blood or fortunes: but all our affairs and circumstances seem fairly to concur for our encouragement in the practice of virtue and true religion.

But notwithstanding we are not put upon such fiery tryals, as the primitive Christians were, which in those days were so common, and an escape so rare and unusual, that our Apostle, *ver. 12.* tells them, that they must *not think it strange concerning the fiery tryal which was to try them, as tho' some strange thing happened to them; but to rejoyce, in as much as they were partakers of Christ's sufferings.* Though the sword be now sheathed, and the fire quite extinguished, the name of Christian no longer infamous or dangerous, nor our loyalty and sincerity to that cause to be avouched and warranted by the loss of life or estate; yet still there are private and peculiar afflictions, that seldom or never fail to attend

tend the righteous in some instances or other. Their privilege of suffering was never quite taken off, but seems to have been entail'd upon them from the beginning. Tho' piety doth not publicly suffer under the common executioner, yet by a certain sort of ignominious penance, it is often expos'd to scorn and contempt, it is in many instances discountenanced, and finds but cold reception in the world. There is a certain secret and under-hand persecution against the righteous; it is not the way of the world to be over concern'd for religion, I mean the practice of it, and they that are so are look'd upon but as unsociable creatures, as morose and humourous, and only checks and spies upon the liberties of good company, and the freedom of conversation. So that sound piety and strict devotion are shut out of doors, or fittest to be shut up with monasticks and discontented persons, such as have given over all their hopes of enjoyment in this life, and have nothing else to do but to think of another. Remissness and indifferency doth much better shift it in the world, and there are thought but few virtues and duties in the Gospel that will contribute to the getting of honour or an estate. Meekness and humility, patience and self-denial, bearing of injuries, and forbearing a return, or doing good for evil, are excellent instances of Christian submission, and indeed bravery, as well as of the most holy temper. And the man of the world will take care that they be kept up in a due exercise, by putting such upon frequent tryals, that keep up the practice of such unusual unfashionable virtues. The oppressor

oppressor will not spare a man for his strict honesty, but take his advantages as occasion offers. The cruel is commonly so great a coward, as but the more to insult, where he luckily lights upon a meek and passive spirit. The loose and *Atheistical* part of the world are liberal of their derisions and invectives, towards the *credulous* and *superstitious*, the reproachful names they cast upon all those that with zeal (and with good reason too) adhere to the sound faith delivered in the holy scriptures, and thereupon are strict and serious in their conversations, and constant and devout in their religious worship, and ever honest and punctually just in all their dealings. The complaint is of great antiquity, and there was never known any intermission of it; *Job* had experienced it. (*ch. xii. v. 4.*) *The just upright man is laughed to scorn*; and holy *David*, tho' a king, as much, from such as *whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect*, *Pf. lxiv. 3, 4.* So the Prophet *Jeremy* was served. *c. xx. v. 8.* *The word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily.* Under the Gospel; as religion advanced, so reproaches increased, as is abundantly known thro' all the histories of Christianity; but the blessing thereby is made the more secure; preferable to all the blessings of this life. *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake: Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, Mat. v. 11, 12.*

In a word, men of virtue and true religion
both

both in faith and practice make up but a small party in the world, as hath been observed already ; and therefore it is no wonder that they are bore down, and come to the worst on it, amongst the several ranks and orders of vicious livers and unbelievers, that in such numbers swarm among us, and infect the church of God. These are true and just complaints, yet truly not such mighty grievances, but wisdom and religion may easily over-look or disregard them : Two considerations are sufficient to cure or repel them.

(1.) Altho' the righteous are inconsiderable in number, and so unable to bear up against the world, yet they have thereupon a very solacing promise from their Lord and Saviour, who is above the world, to keep up their spirits. Luke xii. 32. *Fear not little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* They may well bear with the insolences and petty injuries of wicked designing men, when they shall so manifestly out-strip them at last, and get a kingdom, and their enemies for ever shut out.

(2.) Let a second consideration be, That the worst enemies of religious men, are commonly the worst of men. And it may be questioned, whether most of them are not hypocrites even in their hatred, have a secret and inward veneration and esteem (though an envious one) for good and righteous livers, wish themselves in their cases and capacities, that they could live their lives, that so they may die their deaths : only carnal and worldly pleasures and designs keep them off from imitation. It may be sufficient glory and satisfaction to the righteous, that they have secret approbation

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bation from the serious and wisest thoughts of wicked men; who thereupon do cast an awe and check upon them in company (so irresistibly rever'd is virtue) as to cause some interruption at least in the career of their vices.

But we must proceed farther yet, and proceed to higher difficulties, before the righteous can be discharged. They are often both disheartened and retarded in their progress, which denotes how scarcely they are saved, by some more heavy and signal punishments and afflictions, by the more immediate hand and designation of God; and those often-times inflicted upon them in so singular and severe a manner, as tho' his wrath and displeasure were more enkindled against them, than against the most hardened and impenitent sinners. But if the righteous do but keep up their integrity under such sufferings, and reason upon their case, they will make wonderful and even enravishing discoveries of singular favour and love towards them, of peculiar care and guardianship, of fatherly tenderness and affection. Our fathers in the flesh are never upbraided for not punishing other men's children, because they chastise their own; yet surely have more love and kindness for their own than for other men's, and prove it by their exercising that authority and severity upon them.

There must be singular kindness in the intent, equal to the choicest mercies here below, and often-times more seasonable, when God vouchsafes to correct, that he might amend his own people; and doth it with some sharpness and severity, that their virtues and graces may be the
more

more illustrious and triumphant, having pass'd the utmost tryal. Besides, there is a visible distinction in the strokes, which may be of great consolation to the pious patient. St. Paul hath observ'd it in severer discipline than usually exercis'd upon Christians in our days, 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroy'd.* There is ever a difference, with sensible favour, between the afflictions upon the righteous, and the judgments or vengeance upon ungodly persevering sinners. So likewise have the Saints ever a more comfortable prospect of their escape and deliverance out of all their troubles; which those desperate wretches can never hope for, from that vengeance they cannot but be conscious they have justly deserv'd, and have made implacable: as you are assured from the same Apostle, 1 Cor. x. 13. *There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it:* but, Rom. ii. we have dire denunciations of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man, that doth evil, that hath despised the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; and hath not considered that the goodness of God is to lead us to repentance; that after his hardness and impenitent heart hath treasured up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Let not then this doctrine or, more rightly, discipline of afflictions, discourage us, but rather

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incite and animate us to bravery and resolution in our spiritual warfare: there is *a crown of glory* before us, and we are by sufferings put into the best post of honour for that attainment. All manner of supplies and assistances from heaven, we may be assur'd, will be at our devotion; at our call we may say: for if we send up our prayers and supplications thither in strong cries and groans, with faith and zeal, with trust and resignation, and live holy lives, and yet suffer: this is so highly pleasing to Almighty God, that it will entitle us by promise to all aid and support from his grace and holy Spirit.

Thus I have laid before you the first and greatest difficulties by sufferings that lye in the way of salvation: judge ye, whether the reward doth not infinitely surpass them. The promise of such transcendent glory must sound incredible, were there no contest or combat to be engaged in, nor victory to be accomplished. The sordid worldling every day runs the risque of greater fatigue and hardship, for his filthy gains, as well as the man of ambition, to gain his point; and shall any lyon in the way frighten the sluggish and cowardly Christian from his pursuit of an everlasting crown of righteousness; *which God the righteous judge shall give to all those that have fought the good fight, and have happily finished their course;* that is, have fought their way thro' all the difficulties of the world, to a kingdom of everlasting peace and glory. And so I conclude with St. Peter in the close of this Epistle, from which I have taken my Text.

The God of all grace, &c.

SERMON

SERMON XXXVII.

The Difficulty of Salvation.

I PET. iv. 18.

*And if the righteous scarcely be saved ;
where shall the ungodly and sinner ap-
pear ?*

IN justice to my Text, as well as to make good my promise made in this place (whether either be remember'd) I think my self obliged to make some end of this subject, concerning the *difficulty of salvation* : that difficulty which the obstinate world, instead of conquering, seems to resolve shall be insuperable ; and will not suffer even an Almighty Saviour to overcome : that stubborn difficulty, that will not move or stir at the faith of the Gospel, which can remove mountains, and so must grow up into a fatal impossibility, if men will not renounce their sins, and submit to the fair proposals of so great Salvation.

For surely it can be no less than a contradiction, and so not to be effected by divine Omnipotence, that infinite justice, and wisdom, and goodness, should be interess'd in the advance of

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mortals from a state of sin and corruption, to immortality and glory, to the immediate presence and fruition of God, or the beatifick vision, without the previous dispositions, and qualifications, and practice of purity, piety, and virtue: and then upon an easy view we shall discern the slender numbers of those who take that *narrow way, that leadeth unto everlasting life.*

The method I laid down for the discoursing upon these words, was to consider,

I. The doctrine here asserted by way of supposition, *viz.* The very great difficulty of salvation, even to the righteous, and the conclusive fate of ungodly, sinful men.

II. I was to enquire into the nature of those difficulties, with which the righteous are beset; and to administer what relief I should be able, in so deplorable tho' no desperate case.

Upon the *first* I have given you abundant testimonies, how this impetuous difficulty hath held it throughout the *Old and New Testament*: that the *whole world lyeth still in wickedness*; that original sin and corruption, beyond the force of all poisonous contagions, hath scattered its venome over the face of the whole earth, and hath kept up its virulent malignancy from generation to generation. Altho' *Christ Jesus be come into the flesh* to heal all our diseases, and to *redeem our lives from destruction*, as the *Psalmist* expresses it, to *crown us with his loving kindness, and tender mercies*; yet the plague is not stayed, none escape the infection, and very few the mortal stroke.

According to the course, both of nature and pro-

providence, it must be left to the power of every patient, to frustrate the efficacy of the most sovereign medicines. Under the dispensation of the Gospel, we are furnished at large with all necessaries (and the only ones that could be prescribed) to recover us from sin and death; but not against our wills, or with force upon our obstinate refusals. The *blood of Christ* is of infinite virtue to *cleanse us from all our sins*: but we must submit to the operation, and not brutishly wallow in our lusts and pollutions. The grace of God is all sufficient, but not irresistible. It waits, and is ready for our acceptance, and admission, but it will not force its entry: it will bear us up against temptation, or make way for escape; but then we must not be on the adverse side, confederate with our tempters, and assisting to their machinations and allurements: it will make virtue and all religious duties easy and delightful to us, and carry us over all the difficulties of our spiritual warfare; but then we must earnestly and incessantly pray for it, as transcending all other blessings; cherish it in our hearts; and put forth too our own strength toward the work; and still confide more in its assistance than in our own abilities.

In a word, it is impossible, that Christ Jesus, tho' both God and man, who came from heaven to assume our nature, and make satisfaction for our sins by his death, should ever discharge us from the obligations to virtue and holiness: and it is likewise contrary to the nature of obedience (or indeed makes it no such thing) that it should

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should be under force and compulsion ; and then our estate and condition must be much worse by our advantages and offers, if we refuse so great salvation.

This is the true state of the case ; according to the nature of a covenant, Christ Jesus can only be the Saviour of those that will embrace the terms of his salvation : and then if we compare the lives, even of the Christian world, with the precepts of the Christian religion, and consider how far the greatest number of those fall short in their obedience to these ; we may justly fear, upon our own observation without farther authority from holy writ, that the truly righteous are but a slender party, and their salvation difficult, and then the desperate conclusion will be unavoidable, which the Apostle suggests by way of question, of the sad and deplorable estate of the ungodly and sinners, which so visibly make up the (vastly) greatest part of the world.

I have accounted already under this head for what various interpretations are given of this *Text*, or others of the like sound and import ; as also of the *σωτηρια*, that some times signifies *temporal deliverance and salvation*, and not always *eternal* : but the result was, that whatsoever difficulties occur in the means of salvation, must certainly cause the end to be of the more rare and hazardous attainment. And this will abundantly appear under the second general head, which comprised

II. Those difficulties that encompassed the
righteous

righteous in their passage to glory and immortality.

The first instance of which (as most comporting with the context and the subject the Apostle was upon) was *the severe sufferings that are the common*, indeed the very reasonable and necessary lot of christians, i. e. righteous and virtuous li- vers, must run through that discipline in this world, or else skip over the exercise of many graces and virtues, that are to qualify them for that high station of everlasting blessedness, that he hath purchased and prepared for them, by leading the way through the thickest and hottest of persecutions, and most pungent sufferings: that *exceeding weight of glory*, promised must be an incredible reward, without a contest, and without an absolute victory. *Think it not strange*, says our Apostle, verse 12 and 13. *concerning the fiery tryal, which is to try you; as tho' some strange thing happen'd unto you: but rejoyce in as much as ye partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.* I will make no repetition at this time of what I have said upon that subject of sorrow, but shall pass to the *second* instance, not yet spoken to; which was

2. *The difficulty of Christ's precepts in respect to our weaknesses and prejudices.* The duties requir'd of us in the Gospel, including the whole practice of morality, and such a repentance as shall make good the deficiencies (on the performance of which, through the merits of our blessed Redeemer, depends our salvation) are not so easy as we are apt to imagine. Our Lord, indeed, in

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his Gospel, hath encouraged his followers in expressions of a seemingly different import, Matt. xi. 28, 29, 30. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls: for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* These are most certain and comfortable truths, but we must observe, that these inviting expressions were spoken to the *Jews*, who were under the bondage and yoke of the ceremonial law, from which the *Messias* came to set them free, to unload and ease them of those heavy burdens that *Moses* had laid upon their shoulders, or those additional ones, that the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who pretended to sit in *Moses's* seat, had besides the former, more grievous ones, accumulated upon them, and would not so much as put a finger to the work, Matt. xxiii. 2, 4. *My yoke is easy*, saith our Lord, *and my burden is light*, yet still is it a yoke and a burden, but not so galling and pressing as the *Jewish* ones; and there comes in daily relief and consultations in the wearing the one, and bearing the other; whereas the drudgery of ceremony and little else, must be tiresome, slavish, and heartless, could administer but poor hopes, and mean expectations to comfort them, and bear up their spirits.

And if we compare then the placid and heavenly institutions, and injunctions of Christ, with those troublesome niceties and punctilioes in the *Jewish* worship, we shall perceive a liberty and deliverance from a rigorous oeconomy, to more gentle dispensations: that we are
come

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come into a land of *Canaan*, and are no longer under a sort of *Egyptian* bondage; enjoy the glorious liberty of the *sons of God*, and bear that yoke and burden which gives the best badge of honour, as well as truest contentment, to every one that would frame his life according to the best rules of human reason and wisdom, which are eminently contained in the Gospel. But, if again, as to the difficulty, we compare the bare, outward performance of the *Levitical* precepts (which were thought sufficient) with the inward faith, sincerity, and uprightness that are indispensibly required in the duties of the Gospel, we may safely assert, that the observance of these latter is a far harder task than those trite and trivial performances (as comparatively we may call them) of the *Mosaic* ordinances, tho' by no means can they be called, properly, so heavy a burden or so grievous an yoke. For it is much easier offering up the blood and flesh of our cattle, than the more acceptable sacrifice of a contrite heart: and the true circumcision of the spirit is of sharper and more tedious operation than that of the *fore-skin*. Those high duties of mortification, and self-denial, our Saviour's lesson and example, (*learn of me*) of *lowliness*, and *meekness*, of *patience*, and *forbearance*; under the severest afflictions, and most provoking injuries; of remunerating *evil with good*, of loving enemies and forgiving their hatred, of *universal charity*, and the most expensive good nature (tho' common nature be never so reluctant) as they cause a more grateful savour in the presence of the Almighty, than the most *fragrant incense of the*
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most costly oblations ; so are they of a far more sublime nature, for their transcendent excellency, and of a much more rare and difficult performance ; and indeed too great a task and atchievement for our natural abilities without divine assistance.

It is sooner done, and with a great deal less pains for a *Jew* to make a sin-offering, or let go a *scape-goat into the wilderness*, to carry off his transgressions, than to run through all the discipline of a sound and unfeigned repentance, where he is to exert the utmost power and energy of all the faculties, both of his soul and body, to give actual proof and testimony of the sorrow and contrition of his heart, of his hatred and detestation of sin, by breaking off from his transgressions, and passing over into the contrary course and practice of an holy and virtuous life ; or if time and opportunity be not allowed for that confirmation ; then his resolutions must be so strong and established, as to amount to matter of fact, and to pass the approbation of an all-discerning God, who cannot be impos'd upon.

The sordid worldling, as covetous as he is, would bid up in this case, and if he be not hardened to the last degree, as is usual with such wretches, but comes to some sense, of his estate (I mean that of his soul) under the agonies of death, and the approaches of hell, would sacrifice all his stock, and would give back a good part of the worldly good he had gain'd if not all, in exchange for his soul ; if he could buy off repentance, tho' by the most chargeable commutation, and now at the last stake in the best and
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most gainful sense, make to himself *friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*.

Indeed, it is a much cheaper purchase to be at any cost, and outward pains, to make atonement for our sins, than to be put upon the rigours of mortification and repentance.

Those that defy our holy religion, whilst they are in their jollitry, and call all its obligations in-to question, would be glad to be at the expence and labour of a *sacrifice* and *burnt offering*, tho' never so chargeable, to secure their probable effects, and appease that infinite justice, they ever doubted, tho' not firmly believed: but you must excuse them, as to the change of their lives, and not put them upon the hard measures of going out of their road, forsaking their voluptuous vices, and make them to mortify upon insipid virtue.

A *Jew*, of what rank or quality soever, was seldom out, and made rare defaults in his *Levitical* performances and ceremonious observances; you know their Prophets rather complain of the abundance of them, and their defects in more acceptable obedience. And the *Romish* priests fill up the treasure of their church by sconcing their penitents, and the poor wretches are free to pay in commutation for a rugged penance, and any thing rather than be put upon that *obedience which is better* (and indeed far more difficult) *than sacrifice*.

But how few do we see live up to the precepts of the Gospel, that endeavour to please God, appease his wrath, and obtain remission of their sins, by those rules and means that his blessed Son hath ordained, as the necessary conditions

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ons of their redemption? And none of those few, but have sufficiently experienced, with what repugnances and relentings, and untowardness, they are drawn to the practice of those duties.

Stoicks and *Asceticks* may harangue it in the high praises of virtue, and their commendations of its refined pleasures; but as long as soul and body hold it together (and it seldom happens that either desire to part) vice, in matter of fact, will carry the general vogue for present enjoyments, not only those sensual and voluptuous ones, but also those higher pursuits (that require more labour) of worldly gain and honour.

St. *Paul* was very sensible of the predominancy of lusts of all sorts, and may be observ'd thro' all his *Epistles* to make use of agonistical terms (as commentators generally call them) of *fighting*, *racing*, *wrestling*, *warring*, which expressed the strength, the vigour, the courage and resolution of the combatants in the *Grecian* games: and no less was to be put forth and exercised against our own flesh and blood, that robust body of sin, which so frequently over-matches the spirit, and is too hard for the soul, and even its divine faculties of reason and understanding.

Christian religion requires we should be in earnest, and the cause is of too deep concern not to be prosecuted with vigour, and somewhat advanced, every day of our lives; for scarce a day will escape us but we shall be engaged in contest and battle, *the spirit against the flesh, our lusts and passions against our reason*. Our lusts and passions we must restrain and subdue, when they are in their greatest vigour and ascendancy: if they

they are tamed by a disease, by shame, or any accidental punishment, it is none of our victory. Those furious passions that nature hath unhappily arm'd us with, we must have them down and quiet at that very time, when flesh and blood would rouse them up in combustion; we are then to be sedate and peceable, when we are most provok'd, and our spirits are at the highest bent, and ready to burst out in fury and rage; when our flesh is most nearly touch'd and incensed; when our estates and reputations, our nearest properties, are most wrongfully invaded, at that time most especially are incumbent upon us those high duties of *patience*, and *meekness*, and *forbearance*: when our enemies, that have persecuted us, and injur'd us with all extremities of spleen and malice, lye at our mercy, then must shine forth our generous charity, signally illustrated in pardoning and forgiving.

We are to keep a constant distance, and bid an utter defiance, to the world even in the daily use of it, and tho' nature and our necessities have join'd us in the closest union with it, we must quit all self-interest and concern, and our neighbours must go an equal share in our own self-love: tho' distinction and property must be kept up, for civil society and order, yet by the laws of Christianity, we must live in common as to friendship and affection, in care and solicitude, one for another.

What a selfish ill-natur'd fool was that *young man* in the Gospel, that would not throw his estate for the good of the poor, and the service of Christ, who could settle upon him an everlasting habi-

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habitation, and promised it him in his own person: he is utterly rejected as no ways qualified, notwithstanding his boasted proficiencies, to be a professor of christian religion. And if life and estate stand in competition with the essential duties of Christianity, and the eternal welfare of our souls, it is but a reasonable sacrifice, and the truest self-love and interest, to offer them up in so glorious and gainful a cause.

Altho' we are not actually call'd out upon such rigid duty, yet readiness and resolution for such encounters must ever be the habitual disposition of our souls: as courage and bravery is no less the commendable qualification of a good soldier, tho' he be not engaged in actual service.

As thus our obligations to virtue and holiness are justly raised up to the highest strains of morality, under the advantages and glorious promises of the Gospel, and so prove but of rare and difficult performance; so we must farther look to it, that intenseness and sincerity of heart and mind do always accompany our acts of devotion, and religious worship, otherwise they can never be rewardable, or acceptable to an all-knowing God. Here again let us take ourselves to task, and endeavour to get over this difficulty.

If our religion should fail us (I mean in the due exercise of it) we are of *all men most miserable*: our Saviour, when this dreadful question was put to him, *Luke xiii. Lord are there few that be saved?* told his followers, that they must *strive to enter in at the streight gate*; and withal gave them notice, that *many would seek to enter in, but should not be able*: those seekers were no doubt

doubt such has had great confidence in their being of such a persuasion and profession, mighty full of zeal, and busy about the outworks of religion; yet all was but the formality of godliness without the power, sacrifice without obedience. Hypocrisy is a design laid to cheat the world, yet men are apt to raise themselves into some hopes (which is monstrous) of imposing upon God, and that they shall get somewhat from him, because they have been conversant in holy things, kept up very plausible appearances both of devotion and good works. *Lord! say the unrighteous in the Gospel, which were the goats on the left hand, Matt. xxv. when saw we thee an hungred, or a thirst; or in any distress, and did not administer unto thee?* but for all that, he pronounces upon them; *depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:* The charity they boasted of, and confided in, had so many poisonous ingredients, that it became the bane of their souls, and hurried them into everlasting death and destruction.

To what prodigious presumption were the *Pharisees* rais'd by their being so conversant about religion? tho' they could not be strangers to the rottenness of their hearts, and to the latent villanous designs they had in almost every act of their devotion. With what impudence would they justify themselves, even at their prayers, in the immediate presence of God, and challenge his favours upon their (*filthy*) good deeds? insult it over the *Publicans* and *sinners* (upon that very account for which God would embrace them) because they were humble and penitent, confessing their
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own unworthiness. But our Lord himself hath determined the points in this matter, *Matt. vii. 21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord! Lord! (according to the nauseous and noisy devotion and unmannerly familiarity of some people) shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

Let us take care in this great and difficult work, that our devotion be serious and substantial in this place of worship, and well attested with all virtue and holiness of life and conversation, in all other places and at all other times.

Thus I have only laid before you the general difficulties that attend the practice of virtue and religion: as to particular rules and precepts every man may judge himself, according to the reluctances he hath to the doing of that which is good, and the avoiding of that which is evil.

One single deliberate thought and consideration may be sufficient to determine us into resolute and undaunted action, notwithstanding all the obstacles and difficulties in our way; and that is, the view before us, of everlasting life and everlasting death: tho' we did but lightly suspect or fear as much, and not firmly believe it: it may rouse fluggishness into activity, and startle the most reprobated sinner, as it once did a jaylor, (one of that crew, as it commonly happens) into a fit of *trembling and sore amazement*. I cannot omit the passage, *Acts xvi. 29, 30.* it expresses such exceeding horror; and he (the keeper of the prison) *sprang in and came trembling, and fell down* before his two devout prisoners, and said, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* And the same tremen-

tremendous question, the most stupid of us cannot but sometimes raise within his own breast: *What shall I do to be saved?* Why every manner of thing that can possibly be done: what dare we not to do? to escape the eternal wrath and vengeance of God, and get into his favour, which is getting no less than *a crown of glory*. Stupid and senseless souls, that aim not at high attainments, at least will not quit present gain and enjoyment upon so remote a prospect, may easily be brought to disregard an heavenly crown, any glorious rewards, that are not to commence till their luxurious bodies are laid in the ground: but this is not all; to refuse or despise so great salvation, is inevitable damnation; to miss so great a prize, is to fall into everlasting misery and torment.

There is no doubt but sordid wretches, and base spirited mortals, would rather be annihilated, or vanish into nothing, but this shall not serve their turns; they must continue to *be*, and they must be judged: and that *being* by the infinite and unerring justice of the first Being, must be adjudged to its *proper* mansion of eternity. There is no middle state; the weight of sin and guilt, like that which is natural in heavy bodies, cannot suffer them to hold it above, will sink them down into an abyss of endless misery. Like men under some insupportable calamities, they may wish they had never been born, but this is as impossible as vain: with more probable comfort, and as great hopes, they may *call to the mountains, and rocks, to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne,*

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when the great day of his wrath cometh ; Rev. vi. 16, 17.

It is not in their power to unwish, so as to destroy, their beings; herein they are unhappily as impotent as their most malicious enemies or persecutors, they cannot kill the soul: tho' in desperate hopes of putting an end to some pressing grievances, they may lay violent hands upon their own bodies, yet that inhuman privilege will then be superseded by a decree of everlasting living: that damnable sin of self-murder upon earth, alas! it cannot be committed in hell, there they must live it out, or rather never live it out, in the most dismal abode of eternal melancholy, and torture, in blackness and darkness for ever, *where the worm dyeth not, and the fire is unquenchable.*

If we consider then the immense reward, which cannot be our own, but by the infinite merit and purchase of an almighty Redeemer; and likewise the ineffable punishment, which is all our own debt to an infinite offended justice, the difficulties in the attaining the one, and avoiding the other, must be very inconsiderable.

Nothing that is truly valuable, or dreadful upon earth, but will put us upon the hardest enterprizes, and the most expeditious dispatches for the attainment or deliverance. But in short, it is a work, that must be done, a difficulty that must be got over, or we are for ever ruined. It is the most refractory madness, not to engage in that affair, when the most absolute and pressing necessity calls upon us every moment of our lives; and were we to live out the age of this
present

present world, we should have no more time upon our hands than what would be necessary to work out so great salvation. Which brings me to the last particular I purposed to conclude withal, *viz.*

3. *The absolute and indispensable necessity, that the commandments of Christ must be observ'd, in order to our salvation;* that is, to our utmost abilities and endeavours. The commandment indeed runs high: *be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*, Matt. v. And the preceding commands given forth by our Lord in that chapter, are of the highest strains of virtue and piety, as I have already instanced in some of them: but the perfection required of us cannot be but a possible human perfection: for the divine perfections of God must be inimitable: sincerity and perseverance will be taken for that perfection. Therefore neither can we pronounce, that all cannot be saved, who have not exactly lived up to the doctrines and precepts of Christ; for that by never-failing experience hath ever been found utterly impossible to our frail natures; no! nor that all, who have not, thro' the whole course of their lives, with a persevering and uninterrupted holiness, to the utmost of their endeavours and powers, kept themselves close to the commandments of God, are to be thought to fall short of salvation: for we have the privilege, the sanctuary of repentance, which was not to be admitted of by the law of *Moses*, nor any sacrifice for presumptuous sins; but the penalty was inflicted without mercy, *Heb. x. 26, 27, 28.*

But this high privilege of christianity requires

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the punctual observance of every part and duty that belongs to it; and those are very difficult, as I have instanced already; and if time be not allowed to confirm our repentance, by a consequent reformation of our lives, then God hath only our word for it; and how well we will keep to that, he must necessarily fore-know, and therefore his acceptance must be very hazardous as to us.

Repentance is a summary performance of all our duties together, a certain compendious practice, in short, of what we should have been doing all the time-past of our lives: if so little will satisfy for the whole, we must the more carefully look to it, that there be a strict performance of covenants, and no failure in any requisite point, when so reasonable and favourable conditions are all that are demanded of us.

He that compounds his great and numerous debts for a small and inconsiderable part and proportion, which his creditors are willing to accept of, ought to be exactly just and punctual in the payment of that lesser sum; else deserves the sentence in the Gospel, to be *cast into prison, and not to come out thence, till he hath paid the uttermost farthing.*

Again; As this is a duty of the greatest difficulty, and a failure in its performance is too too likely, probable, and easy, and by experience found most frequent; so we must take heed of trusting too much to it as a refuge or reserve, after we have spent the best, longest, and choicest of our time, the prime of our age, in all manner of negligence and irreligion: for those
requi-

requisite gifts and graces, for an hearty repentance, are not allowed to all sinners, and at all times; but hardness of heart, and a mighty indisposition to true sorrow and contrition, are the usual effects of delaying and deferring amendment, and that usually ends in final impenitence: so then it is our indispensable duty to set immediately on the work. For to say we will repent after such enjoyments, or such a period of time, is making such a project as may justly provoke God never to give us time, or an heart, to engage in that uneasy duty, which we are so hard to be brought to. It could be no satisfaction, but highly provoking, to an offended superior or benefactor, to tell him, that after we have gone on for some time in the same course of gratifying ourselves, in abusing his authority and favours, we shall after a while turn about, humble ourselves to him, and beg his pardon, and be sure, after that, never be so disobedient and ungrateful again. Deferring repentance from day to day is the like usage and behaviour towards God, of whom we have no knowledge at all, if we think he can or will be imposed upon after this most unworthy manner: it can be no satisfaction to any creditor to tell him from time to time, we will pay him all we owe him, when we continue to run farther in debt, and keep on the same dissolute practices of ill-husbandry, unthriftiness, and knavery.

The great satisfaction is already made for us by the blood of the Son of God; but this still enhances the obligation, and makes it the more reasonable and indispensable, that the inconsidera-

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ble part, that lies upou us should be answer'd with the strictest observance. If the greatest and hardest of the work be done for us, it implies an absolute necessity, that what is left for us to do, must with all diligence be executed, else we cross all the purpose of God, and Christ Jesus, and do despite unto the spirit of grace ; frustrate the design of infinite wisdom and goodness, throw back with scorn the favours of heaven, will admit of a Saviour, but not of Lawgiver; and so, in effect, declare we will have none of his salvation on those terms.

To the law and to the testimony then we must apply ourselves: the benefits and the obligations were never disjoin'd; *for this purpose*, saith St. John *, *the Son of God was manifested, that he may destroy the works of the devil.* And more expressly saith St. Paul; that † *he dyed for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that dyed for them:* and again, *that he gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from the present evil world: That he loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it, and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish;* this was the prime redemption: says the same Apostle, *he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works:* we must be redeemed from sin, from a vain conversation, before we can be redeemed from death. This

* 1 John iii. 8. † 2 Cor. v. 15. Gal. i. 4. Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. Tit. ii. 14.

This is the current testimony throughout the Scriptures, that all that Christ hath undergone for us, was for the promotion of virtue and holiness, and the effects of his satisfaction will extend no farther than as it may serve to that end. We are thereby put into the fairest possibility and capacity of salvation: we must not call it our unhappiness, that it may be so easily lost, since all piety and goodness are hereby promoted, by being encouraged with the most transcendent reward.

But now, perhaps some people may be offended at this rigid doctrine, as they may be so weak to think it: What! are there but few that shall be saved? and they but *scarcely saved*? this is enough to cast men into despair: but, alas! that is an extremity that very rarely happens; the number of such poor desponding pityable wretches are a very small remnant, and we have no authority to throw them always amongst the damned; since a distrust of themselves and their own worthiness, which may be just and pious, and be sure humble and pardonable, doth commonly precede, or indeed is the cause of, their diffidence in the mercies of God, in which their fault consists. It is the defiance of hell, that sends more, infinitely more, to that place, than the immoderate fear and dread of it. The confident and careless, that are for running the venture of damnation, they are the numerous party; there is indeed no fear of their despair, and God is not beholden to them for their trust in him.

In truth, the greatest part of the world are too secure from despair, they do not so much as

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come upon the borders of it; have no fear at all of God, no regard to his laws; as the Prophet describes them, *Jer. viii. 6. They turn every one to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle:* they take even hell by violence, and their damnation is just: it is the most unjustifiable presumption and arrogance for such, to trust in the mercies of God.

In a word, whilst men continue in their sinful courses, they may even despair of their salvation, and let them despair! no arguments or persuasives ought to be used to bring them out of that condition, but what are to be urged for the immediate reformation of their lives. The way lies plain before us; 'tis we ourselves that make it straight and narrow by the bulk of our transgressions. We have infallible direction, the rule of God's holy word, to walk by; and Almighty assistance, the Holy Spirit of God, to carry us over all the difficulties in our passage. *Let us search the scriptures, for in them we may have eternal life* there fairly offered, if we walk according to them. *I can do all things,* saith St. Paul, *through Christ that strengtheneth me:* his Spirit he hath promised shall abide with us for ever, if we will give him reception.

So then, as to our infirmities and weaknesses and natural insufficiencies, the most ample provision is made for us: the Holy Ghost is ready at hand, at our call and request, as we may say, upon our due application to him in humble prayer and supplication, with an holy disposition of soul, and with due exertion and putting forth our own strength to forward so great a work. It is
true,

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true, the law of God is too hard a task for flesh and blood ; but if he that saved us by his blood will send us an Almighty assistant in the keeping of his laws, our complaints of difficulty will be at an end.

And this is the great office of the Holy Spirit, and he will daily engage in it, bear us up against all temptation, will guard and support us against all the enemies of our souls and salvation, and make our obedience to the holy word of God to be the most easy and comfortable conversation.

*Let us then, as we have been praying this * solemn time of our great salvation, never cease to pray ; that as God hath given us his only begotten Son to take our nature upon him, so he would grant, that we being regenerate, and made his children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by his Holy Spirit, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord ; To whom Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, ever one God, and three Persons, be all honour and glory world without end. Amen.*

* Preached at Christmas.



SERMON XXXVIII.

Preach'd on St. *Peter's* Day.

Of Confessing and Denying.

MATT. X. 32, 33.

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven: But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

SURELY courage in a true religion, which is the cause of God, and hath the glorious promises of the next world, and an Almighty Saviour for the insurance, is a resolution so well grounded, that one would think all Christians must necessarily have it, as the very consequent of their profession. And baseness and cowardice in so noble a cause, and a concern that is everlasting, must argue such an unaccountable degeneracy of soul, that is not to be match'd amongst any of the irregular motions or combats of our passions.

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What! to give up and yield, when the weapons of our warfare (*i. e.* our virtues and graces) cannot by all the mighty powers upon earth be wrested out of our hands! nor the prize, tho' we be torn into a thousand pieces, be rended from us! For the ends of courage are here both ways attain'd, and we are secure of the victory, tho' we fall in the combat.

The primitive sufferers, by standing their ground, and holding fast their profession, either as confessors maintain'd their point, and bore up the cross in spite of all the power and malice of their enemies; or else, if they fell under the persecution, they became more than conquerors, and were presently instated in the martyr's crown. The very fatal blow gives the reward, and the happy vanquished champion, by the promise of eternal and never failing veracity, is ensured of bliss, as soon as shut out of the world by his successful conquerors.

This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith; for who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John v. 4, 5. If our weapons be not carnal, then will they be mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds.

As the innocence and patience of our Saviour laid some of his assailants flat *on the ground*, John xviii. 6. and the primitive sufferers, by their resolute adherence to his cause, sometimes astonished and struck their hottest enemies into relenting and cowardice, and blunted the weapons of their bloody executioners: so sound faith and true religion may still be assured of the same victorious effects,

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effects, and extraordinary assistances; and heavenly supplies of courage will never be denied to a cheerful undertaker in a righteous cause.

Altho' we have now no reason to suggest, that our Religion will meet with any such hardships or encounters, yet Christians must at all times be animated with this courage. And that believer cannot be found at heart, whatever he may profess, who is not always possessed with such a resolute disposition of soul, as to be ready upon all occasions to undergo all extremities, relating either to present life or estate, rather than forego any fundamental doctrine or obliging precept of his religion.

He that is of a lazy and listless devotion is apt to think himself Christian enough, because he is so mighty zealous for the *quiet* enjoyment of his religion; when perhaps he hath rather reason to distrust, that he hath not enough to bear a tryal; but then let him withal be assured, that he hath not enough for the kingdom of heaven.

And this must surely bring to our thoughts what cannot, I think, have escaped common observation: how many we have seen of late outrageously zealous for the defending and guarding true religion, and very nicely apprehensive, and seemingly alarm'd, at all imaginary invasions and machinations against it: 'oh! our religion is in 'danger:' and yet after all, have themselves no ligation at all: and have prov'd themselves truer confessors in a quite different cause; that is, such resolute assertors of their worldly interest, promotion and properties, as to sacrifice all that be-

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longs to religion, and the next world, to their ambition and avarice.

But besides, it cannot be unseasonable now, to press this obligation to christian bravery, and to inculcate the strictest injunctions against all manner of treacherous practices with our religion; because, though there be no danger of its being quite erased, and utterly extinguished, as was the design of its *Jewish* and *Pagan* adversaries; the *gates of hell* shall not in such a manner *prevail against it*; yet there are some among us that would rob and despoil it of its choicest jewels and most illustrious glories, even in this open day, and sun-shine of the Gospel.

We cannot therefore sufficiently enough fortify ourselves in *holding fast the profession of our faith*, from the example of our great Apostle of *this day*: our confidence may be too presuming and over-daring, and our hearts may fail us when we come to the point of tryal; which plainly notifieth to us, that confessing Christ Jesus upon all occasions, and not denying him upon any, is a duty of such weight, and so indispensable, that distrusting our own abilities, we ought to make our application to God for his extraordinary assistance, in bearing up against all the open assailants and secret underminers of our most Holy Religion.

Our Saviour, and he was our Lawgiver, hath here laid down the obligation as a statute and ordinance for ever, in the most express and emphatical terms, according to the strictest and most solemn forms of law, declaring the precept and the sanction: the duty is express, and the reward

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ward is exprefs: the treason and apostacy is exprefs, and so is the penalty; there can be no alleviation or dispensation in the case.

Whosoever shall confess me, &c.

Him will I confess, &c.

But whosoever shall deny me, &c.

Him will I also deny, &c.

From which words, as they lie in their distinct parts, plainly arise these *four* considerations to be discoursed upon.

I. What it is, for us to confess Christ before men, and the obligation to that duty.

II. What it is, for Christ to confess us before his Father which is in heaven; and the greatness of that reward, in return for our confessing him here below.

III. What it is, for us to deny Christ before men, and the foulness of that treachery.

IV. What it is, for Christ to deny us before his Father, and the consequent misery of that just retaliation.

I. *What it is for us to confess Christ before men, and the indispensable obligation to that duty.* To confess Christ will easily be explain'd; St. John shuts up the whole confession of him into one article of faith, and makes it the great *χρὶς ἡμῶν*, and indication of the Holy Spirit, 1 *Epist.* iv. 2. *Hereby know ye the spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth*

feisseth that Jesus Christ is come into the flesh, is of God, or as you read verse 15, in the same comprehensive sense, Whosoever shall confess, that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and be in God. Which last words expressing his highest character, that he was the *Son of God*; and the former denoting his coming into the flesh, and implying the designs thereof, must necessarily comprehend in them all other relative articles of our faith.

So then, to confess Christ, is to assert and own him in all his attributes, in all his offices, as he is our Prophet, Priest, and King; as our Instructor in all righteousness, and our own righteousness; as our Expiator and only Saviour; as our one Mediator and intercessor; all which great acts and offices, of absolute necessity for our redemption, could never have been performed by any created being whatsoever: to own him also as our Almighty Sovereign Lawgiver, the sanction of whose laws *are everlasting life and death*: In a word, to own him in all the essentials of that religion, which, as the most eminent instance of God's love to the world, he hath taught us, *who brought life and immortality to light*.

It is then his most sacred oracles and truths that we must now thus confess, and adhere to, with such ardent zeal, as tho' his sacred Person were violated and mangled, when any of the sound and sacred articles of our faith are either maimed, or impair'd, or over-run with forgeries or human inventions.

Confessing then of Christ is, as in other testimonies and solemn asseverations, a vouching
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and speaking up to the whole truth, and no more than the truth. And tho' there may be controversies about the precise number of fundamentals, yet the case is plain, and no way abstruse in generals and the substance of our faith. What is delivered in the Holy Scriptures, and was believed, and conformed to in the primitive and purest times of the Church, may plainly enough be separated from impositions and corruptions: and hence we may be easily secured in our confessings against the errors of the *Church of Rome*. But what shall we do against those enemies of more imminent danger, and if we may be so bold to say it, much worse Christians, if any at all, who have out strip'd all the sacrilegious violators of our most Holy Religion, and do most villanously deny and renounce the prime and most sacred fundamentals of it, and so endeavour to give it a mortal wound in its very vitals? For the very life and essence of Christianity must consist in these two points; that Christ Jesus was God as well as man, and thereupon all sufficient to make satisfaction for the sins of the whole world: otherwise can it upon no account be called a religion of redemption and salvation to mankind: as St. *John* avouches the forementioned confession, by declaring, *verse 14. of the same chapter, we have seen, and do testify, that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

Here then we cannot but be secure too in our Confession, and therefore ought to be resolute and vigorous in standing by it. For the *Socinians* have so far been brought to this confession
them-

themselves, as to acknowledge that the Scriptures, according to the natural and genuine acceptation of the words and expressions, do fairly imply the doctrines we contend for (particularly relating to the divinity and satisfaction of Christ); but their main plea, against the express and palpable interpretation of them, is, that the sense can no ways be made tractable to their reason, and therefore the most foreign and forced exposition that is agreeable to plain and common sense is rather to be embraced.

From whence we may fairly argue the security of our Confession, and the mad-venture of their Denial. For it is impossible for us to miscarry, in believing and confessing those doctrines, which are contained in those Scriptures which they own to be by inspiration of God, and expressed in those words and terms, which they acknowledge, according to their natural and genuine signification, do sound altogether on our side. But if Christ Jesus should prove to be God, and his sufferings design'd for the redemption of all sound believers and confessors of these doctrines, no unbelievers in the world can possibly come off worse at the day of judgment; when for the poor glory of being reputed rational and sagacious enquirers (which shall then by the way turn to their shame, and the aggravation of their misery) they have renounced the only means, and disown the sole author and finisher of our salvation.

Here then is the best hold and tenure of our religion: What can we do without a Saviour? What! to confess a mere man! How can that

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entitle us to such transcendent rewards? It is an all-mighty, an all-sufficient Saviour, that makes our religion justifiable with preference to all others that are professed in the world. It is from him alone that we can be able to give any reason of our faith and hope in the promises of everlasting glory. Can we imagine those great armies of *Confessors* and *Martyrs* exposed or laid down their lives for confessing a man only? no! most certainly it was for God and man, who had given his life a ransom for them.

It is from hence the Apostle to the *Hebrews* excites them to courage, in standing fast to their religion. *Chap. iv. ver. 14. Seeing then we have a great high Priest* (a doctrine he had proved before) *that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God: Let us hold fast our profession:* And likewise *chap. x.* of that Epistle; he carries on the same argument, from the necessity and all-sufficiency of that *sacrifice by the blood of Christ* in the place and stead of those that were legal and insufficient: he resumes the same rational well-grounded resolution, *ver. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, (For he is faithful that promised)* And since we have such undeniable evidences of these comfortable and encouraging truths to our reason, and such ample promises proposed to our interest, and a Saviour of infinite merits to make the purchase and tread the way before us; let us on no hand give up so glorious, so gainful a profession, so infinitely preferable to all the designs of worldly interest, or present self-preservation: so that in the truest and most literal sense our Lord's
assertion,

assertion, will bear up to demonstration in this case (tho' a seeming paradox) ver. 39. of the chap. before you; *He that findeth his life, shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.*

There is no occasion for enumerating all the particular doctrines of faith, in which we are to confess and own the Lord Jesus; we must not deny him in any. The Scriptures set us right in every point of confessing and defending the truth. Whatever privileges or worldly rights we part with or are despoil'd of, let us not give up (for we cannot be forced out of our faith) any that belong to our everlasting salvation.

So then the obligation to this duty will be laid down in few words. It is Christ indeed we are to confess and own; but the interest and concern is wholly ours. And we have more arguments to prove our obligation to it, and incite our most resolute engagements in it, infinitely more, I may say, (as eternity infinitely exceeds the time of our living here upon earth) than we have to prosecute the most necessary and allowable designs of the world, to defend and stand up for our lives, our most valuable properties and possessions, upon this one consideration, obvious to every man at first thought, that our eternal life depends upon it. For Christian religion is, in one word, the way and means God hath appointed us, how we may come unto him by faith and a good life; how mankind may get into his favour, and enjoy it for ever. It is therefore a covenant of grace or favour, a doctrine of reconciliation founded upon the merits

of an all-sufficient Saviour the son of God, by which we have leave and all encouragement to come in for pardon of our sins, and also for an everlasting inheritance : if we will confess him, he will confess us. And will we not be honest to ourselves, and stand to covenants made in our own behalf? Will we part with any one article of this agreement betwixt God and us, when the whole was framed altogether for our deliverance and salvation? No accession of honour to him, who was infinite in glory from all eternity. Or dare we venture upon the breach of any one precept or injunction contained in this covenant of grace and pardon, lest even such a flaw and failure should void the whole, and throw us back into perdition, into the state of sin and damnation?

This declaration of our Lord was calculated for the first times of persecution and tryal; but still we have occasions for confessing and holding fast the profession of our faith. It was ever a tender point with him, and let us ever look upon it as our supreme and dearest interest; for it will abide with us for ever; he will confess us before his father in heaven: which is our second consideration for enquiry.

II. What it is for Christ to *confess us before his father which is in heaven*; and the greatness of that reward in return for our *confessing* him upon earth. As our *confessing of Christ* is already explain'd, as extending to all the essentials of his religion; so his *confessing us before God*, without any farther explanation, will be as extensive to all

all the purposes of salvation. It is enough ! he will confess and own us, he will stand by us, and become our Saviour.

He that appears at the day of judgment with the greatest merits (as far as any human performances can go by that name) can make no plea for so infinite a reward, unless Christ become his advocate and Saviour. *Every mouth shall then be stopped*, of the righteous as well as the wicked: But it is enough ; the holy Jesus will speak up for us, and by pleading his own satisfaction, upon our repentance and faith, shall give us a title and claim to that *crown of righteousness which God the righteous judge shall give at that day* ; shall give, even in justice and righteousness, for our *confessing him before men* : a reward due by virtue of his promise, and as commensurate with his merits, tho' infinitely transcending our highest pretences.

Whilst he was upon earth, he was glad to be owned by us, and even pleaded for admission into the favour and kind acceptance of men ; and yet, whatsoever was his outward meanness or seeming indigency here, he did by no means want us, so much as we shall him at that great day. It is impossible to express or conceive that necessity : in a common case of life and death, to have an advocate or witness to come and invalidate most opportunely and solidly the whole criminal evidence against us ; to be delivered from the most dreadful and torturing fears ; to be saved from the most impending destruction ; to be snatched, as brands out of the fire ; nay, to be delivered from the hurt, when surrounded

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with the scorching flames, as the three children in the fiery furnace; are all but faint and finite resemblances of this opportune favour and divine benignity we may then enjoy. Christ will confess and own us before his father the almighty judge of the whole world. How slightly soever we may think now of such a blessing, our souls will then earn after such a Saviour: and could we then expiate for ourselves in a thousand such ages of punishment, for one that we have lived in our sinful pleasures, we would gladly make a commutation; for that, we shall then know, must be eternal. Now, if our Lord's confessing us before his father in heaven, doth imply his instating us in all those glorious promises that are made us in his Gospel, we must then necessarily from thence draw these two following inferences:

1. That we cannot but be very distrustful in the foundation of our faith, if he be not truly God, that hath made, and can make good, these immense promises of infinite happiness. Can a mere man give crowns of everlasting glory, in grateful acknowledgment to those that have confessed him upon earth, and paid respect to his person and doctrine? It can be no less than an idolatrous notion, and therefore grossly absurd at this time of day, in such high pretenders to clearer reason, as the *Socinians* would be thought to maintain, that God hath collated or conferred upon Christ the right of requiting and receiving divine worship and adoration, if his descent and origine be no higher than that of creature then born into the world. But how many more mon-

monstrous absurdities must it imply, to maintain, that God hath taken up or advanced a mere man to a certain equality with himself? to sit at his right hand, and to allow him so much administration in the government, as to dispose of all celestial favours and honours to those that had so far favour'd and honour'd him upon earth, as to *confess his name*, and become his followers? Therefore our faith and hope in this great promise of our Lord's *confessing us* before his father in heaven, must relax mightily in comfort and consolation, the nearer we incline to this persuasion, that he was man only, and now advanced to this great interest in the kingdom of God.

2. If Christ's *confessing us* before his father doth imply that immense reward of future glory and bliss, then we cannot but conclude, some extraordinary thing hath been done by him in our behalf, upon which this interest in the kingdom of his father, and this right of rewarding his followers that have confessed him upon earth, is established. For we can never keep up our faith and hope in him by such a weak imagination, as that it was his excellent example and good precepts of holy and virtuous living, that raised his *confessing us* to such a validity, as thereby to deliver us from eternal wrath, and instate us in eternal blessedness. And what could that extraordinary undertaking be? but the satisfaction he made to the justice of God, by his sufferings in this relation, and with this designation of them, we have an abundant account in the holy Scriptures. Now Christ, by nothing else that he taught or acted

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upon

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upon earth, could have been entitled to this power in heaven, of saving his followers, by confessing them before his father, without his sufferings: therefore most certainly it was for us he suffered, and those sufferings must be of infinite value and sufficiency, to make satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; because our great expiator and redeemer was both God and man: who upon this bottom and foundation, if we confess him upon earth, in sound faith and holy living, will confess us before his father in heaven, to all the purposes and advantages of eternal salvation.

Our great Apostle, confessor and martyr, St. *Peter* founded his faith upon *this rock*; the very same upon which his Lord, from the Confession and from his name founded his Church, as hath been read to you out of the Gospel for this day: *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.* What could be the import of this confession, but the acknowledgement of his divinity? His Lord seemed to be raised into an ecstasy of joy upon it, for the truth's sake, as well as for the justice done him, and thereupon gave his blessing with the greatest *euge* and applause: *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona! for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is heaven:* and promised thereupon to confer upon him the highest trust, the *keyes* of the kingdom of heaven. *Mat. xvi.* To confess him to be no more, nor higher than *John the Baptist*, or *Elias*, or *Jeremias*, or any one of the *Prophets*, seems to be rejected as a very defective faith: But when St. *Peter* breaks forth into a declaration of this
great

great myſterious truth, then his confeſſion is receiv'd and confirm'd with wonderful approbation, and aſcribed to immediate and extraordinary inſpiration from God the Father; and was above the reach of fleſh and blood, tho' reaſon preſided over them, to make the diſcovery.

Now, as to St. *Peter's* not underſtanding the other great myſtery of his Lord's ſufferings, as appears from the following part of the chapter from whence the Goſpel is taken; the reaſon is then given: *He ſavour'd not the things of God, but thoſe of men*: He there altogether conſulted fleſh and blood, out of tenderneſs to his maſter's honour and preſent ſafety; and took upon him to rebuke him, ſaying, *Be it far from thee, Lord: This ſhall not be done unto thee*. The revelation of the other myſtery was then made to him, but the time was not yet come, that he ſhould be acquainted with this of his paſſion and the purpoſes of it: But when this myſtery was finiſhed, he abounds in this confeſſion: That *Chriſt ſuffered for us in the fleſh: Who his own ſelf bare our ſins in his body upon the tree, that we being dead to ſin ſhould live unto righteouſneſs, by whoſe ſtripes ye were healed. Chriſt hath once ſuffered for ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt (that he might bring us unto God) being put to death in the fleſh, but quickened by the ſpirit.* 1 Epift. ii. 24. iii. 18. And in his ſecond *Epistle* he is ſevere againſt thoſe *false teachers, that ſhall privily bring in damnable hereſies, even denying the Lord that bought them*.

Thus I have endeavour'd to give you a full import of our Saviour's promiſe, of *confeffing* and owning his followers and thoſe that have *confeffed* him

him upon earth, before his father in heaven : All blessedness is imply'd in it, and from hence we have drawn the inferences of Christ's divinity and infinite satisfaction; in which the substance of our confessing him consisteth, and by which he hath purchased for us, and hath the sovereign disposal of, an everlasting crown of glory : a ransome and donation that no true reason can maintain to be in the power of any created being. For the proof of these doctrines, omitting all others from scriptures, I have confined my self to the confession of St. *Peter*; (whose blessed memory we celebrate this day, as a renowned confessor and martyr) in whose infallibility we may so far confide; tho' a very absurd and unjust claim in any of his successors.

And now I pass to the other side of the text, where the *denial* and denunciation run as high, as here the *confession* and promise : where our great confessor too will a while be concern'd, but will happily get greater strength and courage by his fall, which he so bitterly lamented.

III. In the third place we are to consider, what it is for us to *deny Christ before men*, and the foulness of that treachery. These negative points of the Text will require the shorter discoursing upon, because, as to the main, they are included in the positive. Our Lord in this chapter sums up all the grievances that were likely to be fall him and his church in its first establishment. ver. 17. He bids his Disciples *beware of men* ; and he might well give the caution, for he knew them full well : So it is said,

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John ii. 24, 25. when many seemed to be kind and believing, upon seeing the miracles that he wrought, yet he would by no means trust them; nor did he commit himself to them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man: Very sharp reflections upon those he came to save! for indeed but little encouragement had he from them for his great undertaking; on the other hand, he tells his Disciples, what opposers of him and his religion they would be. *They shall deliver you up to the councils, they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governours and kings for my sake, and ye shall be hated of all men.* ver. 17, &c. These are frightful menaces, and of great prevalence, we must conclude, in that age; for we see lesser are so now; and yet the great captain of their salvation fortifies them with an encouraging expression, which in reason must beget resolution in so good a cause, and make it infallibly safe, supposing the worst, v. 28. viz. *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: But rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

But these were Jewish and Heathen persecutors, and now out of our way; besides, are not the great offenders meant in the Text. The crime that is here surmised, relates to those false and treacherous deniers and renouncers of Christ; whose apostacy from a religion they have subscribed to, and base ingratitude to a Saviour they have once confessed and own'd, must necessarily aggravate their crime, perhaps that of their persecutors; according to the resentments
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of king David : *It was not an open enemy that could have done him so much dishonour* : He could have bore ill usage from such a one, but it was an *acquaintance and familiar friend*, Ps. lv. one that had been *his companion* ; they had *took sweet council together, and walked as friends to the house of God* ; that is to say, joyned together in the strict union of the same religious worship. Indeed the indignity of such an act may justly raise the highest provocation ; for a Religion, or Church, to be ruin'd by those of its own order ! it is, in the nearest sense, *crucifying afresh the Lord of life*, and doing the utmost *despite to the spirit of grace* ! an instance of ingratitude not to be match'd amongst all the base dealings of men one with another ! as we should pronounce, could we rightly estimate the obligations.

And here our great Apostle St. Peter, tho' so late the greatest and soundest *confessor*, cannot be excused our reflection, for basely *denying his Lord and master*. It is true our Church, in due honour to him upon his own day, hath not in any part of the office in the least touched upon this lapse, or any other of his lesser failures ; but this part of my Text must bring him in, and yet he is an exception to the following one. At that critical-trying time he *denied*, he abjur'd his Lord and master ; but his repentance was as quick as his surprize : He recover'd his Saviour's favour before his passion, who be sure hath not denied, but more signally confessed him, before his father in heaven.

The crime indeed was horrible and amazing, but the remorse came up to the very height of it,

it; and then with God mercy prevails over judgment. No less than such an high-strain'd penitence could expiate for such vile treachery: And still extraordinary assistance was necessary for his recovery; for it is said *Luke xxii. 61. that the Lord*, (that majesty he had offended) *turned and looked upon Peter*, and he sure convey'd succours to him, and kept him from *sinking*, (as he had done before, when he was *walking upon the waters*, and his faith failed); upon that piercing glance his memory was awakened, and the warning being given by the *Cock's* crowing, *he went out and wept bitterly*. His repentance was so seasonable and signal, that it ought to be reckoned amongst his glories. To recover honour lost, oft-times proves the more happy occasion of remarkable bravery. His courage was undoubted, for he had drawn his sword a little before against a whole band of soldiers, and did execution in his Lord's defence; and his confession too before that (which I have given you already) was found and resolute: But the great mystery of the passion had not been revealed unto him and his faith was shook in the other article: for it must needs be startling; he had *confessed* him before to be *Christ the son of the living God*; but then how comes He now to be reduc'd to those extremities, to be brought under the dominion and tyranny of wicked men! And thus by the surprize, and in the confusion of his thoughts, he might fear the cause was lost.

But how inexcusable and sinful soever was his *denial*, besides his immediate repentance, in the quickest demonstrations of it, his following services

vices and sufferings, in the cause of his crucify'd Lord ; confessing him in innumerable greater dangers and difficulties, under daily shockings and discouragements throughout the greatest cities in the world, and to the faces of their most rigid magistrates and rulers, with a courage and resolution that was never foil'd again ; and at last crowning all with a glorious martyrdom in the great *Metropolis* of the Empire, must necessarily restore him to favour, and secure to him his place and trust and honour in the kingdom of heaven, which was promised him upon his first confession. Oh ! that all the open and secret renouncers, and betrayers of the Church of Christ, may repent with as quick dispatch, and prevent her ruin, and their own damnation.

What we are to conclude from this example, in relation to ourselves, is, that to deny Christ in any wise must be a sin of the deepest guilt and highest provocation ; and the recovery and restitution must be exceeding difficult ; a sin we are liable to every day in some relation or other : but let us take notice, that when it is committed by us, it must be attended in all likelihood with some worse circumstances of guilt, than *St. Peter's denial* was.

He disowned him, when he was depressed down into the lowest dejection of his humane state, when God himself seemed to have forsaken him, according to his own mournful complaint. If we deny him, in any relation, it must be with the most defying ungodliness ; when he hath been confessed thro' so many ages, by the most learned and best moralled men ; and his Church establish-
ed

ed and cherished by the wisest and most rational government of the world : and he himself carried through the most glorious triumphs of a resurrection and ascension, *is sat down at the right-hand of the majesty on high*, as we profess to believe.

Let us then fear and tremble at all suggestions of a betraying spirit : and, that we may be secure in so dreadful a concern, let us not think it enough to stand to fundamentals (which, in truth, we are not sufficient to judge of, nor which way our Church may be undermined) but let us not suffer one jot or title of the law of Christ to pass from us.

Many compliances in lesser matters may usher in a total denial : and he *that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much ; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much*, Luke xvi. 10. Slighting in little punctilioes are oft-times most disgustful, and a little affront may be a sufficient indication of great disrespect and some hatred : and the greatest niceness of honour (excuse the expression) ought to be allowed to him that requires, and hath a just right to, the entire devotion of the whole man ; and with an unerring eye discerns every fault, defect, and designed reserve, all partiality and hypocrisy in our services.

This is truly an age not very tenacious of religion, little subject to zeal, in *holding fast the profession of the true faith*, and so not likely to be renowned for many confessors or martyrs. Relaxing and giving up is the modern politicks ; and impositions cannot come faster than they are received ; a *Party* cause shall at any time supersede any

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any one of *religion* and *justice*; and the Church of Christ, in humble and prudential moderation, is ever postpon'd as the lowest interest among us. It is true, it is not come to a down right *denying*; but a loose and slighting regard to Christ and his Church will be taken very unkindly; and to despoil them of any of their regalia's, will be very affronting, as well as sacrilegious. It is pleaded, that by condescension and compliances we shall secure the main constitution, and by parting with, and giving up some externals, we shall preserve the whole, gratify great people, and increase our friends:—So spend-thrifts say and project, when they sell their estates by parcels, and part with the out-skirts first, but all goes at last. And some may live to see, with sorrow or satisfaction (as they shall be inclined) the fate of that constitution which must be *moderately, calmly, or indeed coldly* guarded and defended.

But, however it fares with us in this world, let us endeavour to secure the interest of the next, which no power or policy can put us by, and that must be by *confessing* Christ in demonstration and matter of fact. Let us strengthen and keep our fabrick in favour with God, and in honour and due esteem with all wise and good men, by our most holy and exemplary lives and conversations, according to the example and precepts of the holy Jesus, the name and religion we profess, and must confess unto the death.

All wicked livers of whatsoever community they are, whilst they continue such, are open and bare-fac'd deniers and defyers of Christ Jesus, and his religion; according to St. *Paul's* sense, *Tit. i.*

16. they *profess* that they *know* God, but in works they *deny* him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate; and Christ will as certainly *deny* them before his father in heaven: which is the doleful close of my Text.

IV. We are to consider the import of that sentence of Christ's *denying* all such Apostates, renouncers of him and his religion, *before his father which is in heaven*. This sentence is a retaliation of such equity, that we cannot separate it from the necessary and most essential justice of God. We generally give acclamation to all such proceedings, where baseness and ingratitude, and, as we may say, inhumanity are thus serv'd, and justly remunerated and revenged, according to their own deservings, and with a resemblance and just proportion to their own dealings. They have denied the Lord of life; can he in any justice or equity own them?

We naturally resent no indignity so high as to be disowned and renounced, especially by those that have been our acquaintance and pretended friends; that they should seem not to know us, or to be ashamed of us, cuts us to the heart: under that resentment it is expressed by another Evangelist, *Mark viii. 38. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of the father, with the Holy Angels*. Flesh and blood can never bear this: and did Christ take upon him our humanity, and can we think him insensible of so piercing an affront? And as to his

SERMON XXXIX.

On the 5th of *November*, before the Lower House of *Convocation*. 1704; and then proposed to be printed, but declined for some peculiar Reasons.

EPHES. V. 8.

For ye were sometimes in darknes, but now are ye light in the Lord: Walk as Children of light.

A PROPER and usual method to keep people from forgetting themselves, to make them humble, and own their benefactors, is to put them often in mind of their original, and let them know from whence they came; especially when their beginning hath been but mean and ordinary. So the good *Apostle* friendly and seasonably deals with the *Ephesians*: I pray, whence came ye! what are ye! alas! they were but Heathens, (or some of them but *Jews* as blind as they) a very few years ago; sorry ignorant wretches, their extraction notoriously obscure, for it was out of *darkness*, and from under the captivity of the prince of darkness; and their deliverance the greatest leap and advancement (as from a dungeon to a throne)
into

into most marvelous light, and into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. So the Apostle tells them more plainly and without a figure, Chap. ii. ver. 11, 12. *Wherefore remember that being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, ye were without Christ, being aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.*

Now *darkness* is the most comfortless estate that can be called by any name: and that is the most dreadful description of it that possibly can be given, viz. *having no hope and without God in the world*; or as you read chap. iv. ver. 18. of this Epistle; *having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.*

And on the other side, *light* is the daily comfort of human life, without which all things but sleep and sin are scaring and dolesome. It is the most pleasant and necessary medium, by which we not only behold objects, and beget a sense and knowledge of them, but by which we enjoy them, and receive the benefits of them: and it is only unhappy to him, who fears a discovery of his wickedness. *For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved*; says the great light of the world, *John* iii. 20.

But without farther enlarging upon the metaphor, let us come to the subject matter of the words, which stand ready divided into these three parts:

I. The infelicity of mankind before the light of the gospel. *Ye were sometimes darkness.*

II. The recovery or happy revolution. *But now are ye light in the Lord.*

III. The obligation thereupon: *Walk as children of light.* And each head will afford me occasion to make some remarks upon the principles and practices of those our adversaries, who on this day had devised at one blow to conclude the fate of this Church and kingdom.

I. Of the infelicity of mankind before the light of the gospel; *Ye were sometimes darkness.*

The contemplation of this estate of mankind (tho' at so great a distance of time) ought to raise in us the greatest value for that revelation, which *brought life and immortality to light*; and which heaven intended as the greatest blessing to the world. We may allow to the *Jews* some glimmerings of light, but at best they are called but *shadows*, and indeed are very gloomy and obscure, in comparison to the sun of righteousness.

But the words of the Text, being spoken to the *Epheſians*, direct us to the *Heathen* world (tho' there were *Jews* amongst them) which for almost four thousand years had lain in this abyſs of darkness. Our Apostle, in another place, calls it by a name that sometimes imports innocence, and so is capable of alleviation, Acts xvii. 30. *And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*

Ignorance

Ignorance and innocence may for some time go together, but can never hold it long; for ignorance will beget folly, and then soon down-right sin and rebellion against God: darkness is a very inviting shade to all manner of wickedness.

St. *Paul*, after the description of their miserable dark estate *Chap. iv. ver. 19.* of this *Epistle*, farther enlarges upon the dissolute effects: *who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.* And this proved the product of their ignorance, as appears by all the barbarities, as well as lewdness, we read of in *Heathen* story.

It is wonderful to imagine, how such brutish folly should prevail in the world, and most generally in the matters of religion (for they were wise enough in most other things); but in that only their reason seems wholly to have deserted them. And indeed reason will make but a poor distinction betwixt man and beast, if religion be laid aside, or, which is as bad, if exercised in such vile and absurd rites and practices, so unsuitable to the divine nature and essence, as looks more like prophanation of the name of God, and rather likely to bring down vengeance upon mortals, than procure any favours or blessings from heaven. But in truth the wonder is not so great, if we consider the degeneracy of Christianity itself, which hath notoriously deviated farther from its first institution and foundation, than the *Heathen* worship from the first natural knowledge of God.

All the politicks upon the earth could not have devised a religion, so fitted and ordained as the Christian, to confound and dash in pieces all the

idolatries of the heathens, to shut off for ever the numerous ceremonies of the *Jews*, and to prevent the appearance of the like superstitious corruptions in the world, to establish peace and mercy by such strict laws, as must make it a contradiction to the whole constitution to violate them. But though this was the work of infinite wisdom and goodness, man hath made shift, in a great measure, to baffle the design. Notwithstanding all this security against all manner of corruptions, all possible plea or pretence for cruelty or persecution, nay, for any one hard-natured act or design of uncharitableness; yet the greatest part of the Christian world, which call themselves Catholick, have debauched and prostituted all this purity and innocency of religion; dressed it up in like *antiques* with the *Pagan*, and affixed to it all the old badges of superstition, and outside carnal worship, which it was purposely designed to lay aside; and, what is most monstrous, have made *treason* and *deposing of kings* to be an article of faith. And the prosecution of such doctrines, in all the barbarous acts of conspiracy and hostility, for the advancement of the *holy church* and extipation of *heresy* (as they alone call both) must be esteemed the highest Christian, i. e. *Romish* bravery and merit.

It will take up too much time, and I believe be superfluous at this, to trace all these works of *darkness* on both sides, *heathen* and *popish*, from their first beginnings of corruption: how the law of nature came to be so adulterated; and how Christian religion came to be so embased from its primitive purity: without an historical relation,
upon

upon a common view, we may judge of the comparison; and without calling names, or branding the Church of *Rome* with the very same idolatry of the Heathens: yet the resemblance is too near and visible to be over-look'd, and the aggravation of guilt most notorious on the *Romish* side; because their deviation was from a far greater light and revelation, with the most divine injunctions and denunciations, than had ever before been declared and manifested to the world.

To take a short view then in the first place of the *Heathen* darkness; What a strange animal was man? What a trifle was human reason? to be run up into such a religion, that one would have thought the most helpless principles of nature could not have suggested to him! Sun, and Moon, and Stars, the element of Fire, and such like (indeed) glorious bodies, were their first and most creditable gods. But even this idolatry was too refined to hold them long: they must seek for gods amongst the rubbish of the creation; every little being that served for any use was made capable of adoration; the Supreme one generally excepted, or had the least or most remote share of divine worship. Whatsoever afforded a kind shade to the body, or a favourable relish to the taste, their sensuality taught them, in due thankfulness, to adore: Nay, their very passions, and infirmities of human nature, were so indulged, as to be thought worthy of temples and altars: So that *Varro* may be allowed to say, that the number of their gods were many thousands. Whatsoever a nation peculiarly lov'd or fear'd, if it either had proved beneficial or hurtful (it was the same

same thing) 'twas soon canoniz'd, and pass'd into a deity. If a deceased hero had formerly been a *deliverer*, or a *destroyer* (it was all one) he was equally qualified for an *Apotheosis*: The one according to his old wont may do 'em mischief, as well as the other do good: The one serves for a *Tutelar God*, and the other for a *Dis Averruncus*; and their services to them were as ridiculous as barbarous and inhuman. For bestial lusts and human sacrifices were often-times their expiations, and games and pastimes were the vain and ludicrous oblations of praise and thank-givings, and, we cannot but conclude, their familiarity with such sort of gods.

The more refined nations for learning and polity (that called the rest of the world *Barbarian*) were scarce a step higher: and the wisest philosophers and most politick statesmen, the most rational orators and ingenious poets; whatsoever might be their inward sentiments, as to one supreme being, the true and only God; yet had no more wit and probity, than to take up with the gods and the worship of the common people, and sometimes make both the subject of their writings, with encomium and approbation, as well as defence and vindication. Thus *Isaiah* observes, when he is describing the idolatries of the land, chap. ii. 9. *The mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself; therefore forgive them not.*

By the way then, the *Church of Rome* makes but a poor plea for her authority and grandeur, because so many mighty champions of quality, eminent for parts and learning, have defended her cause; for we see the greatest standards of learning

learning in the Heathen world, the first inventers of arts and sciences, who generally believed the immortality of the soul, were so miserably deceived and mis-led, in so momentous a point and concern.

Now, imagine but the world, or particularly this nation, to have continued in this dark estate, under this monstrous blindness and idolatry, Can any thing look more direful and calamitous to our own apprehensions?

Christianity hath in a great degree followed the same fate: and the managers of the apostacy are so violent and impatient, that they will never leave working; stick at no unchristian means, to promote their *Catholick* cause, and bring us all into the dark again; where our religion shall be as comfortless as that of the Heathen; where we must renounce our reason and our very senses, which indeed are of very little use in a state of such darkness, and will be too apt to prie heretically into ignorance, which is their only mother of devotion; where instead of thousands of Gods, we shall have as many saints and intercessors, that can hear and help as little, and many of them (to reserve a due veneration for the true primitive ones of the first order) of as little credit as the *Pagan* heroes: all to distract our religion, and to take off our trust and best interest in the true and only God, and his son Jesus Christ, the only mediator betwixt God and man. In a word, where we must palm upon heaven with such brutish superstition, such nauseous ceremonies, such cold and heartless devotion, as must necessarily be most odious and provoking in the
fight

sight of God. And how deplorable must our condition be, when our very religion shall become the aggravation of our guilt? How great our sins, that should throw us back into such a state of darkness, the severest of all punishment, next to that of being reserved in the chains thereof? And here too our reason and consciences are to be fettered and chained down to such a blind and implicate faith and obedience, that nothing but despair and confusion can arise upon every glimmering of light, as *having no hope, and without God in the world.*

Now, tho' we do not charge this comparison so rigidly upon our adversaries, as to throw them into the *heathen* world; we freely allow them the possibilities of grace and salvation through Jesus Christ in whom they believe, and whose name they profess, tho' they deny all to us; we do not maintain the parallel to run exactly, as to all points of doctrine and practice; yet the resemblance must stare the whole world in the face, which they can never elude or disprove.

And as to their cruelties and inhumanities towards us, to reflect on which the projected villainy on *this day* leads us; and which we have already reckoned as the blackest of all the works of *darkness*; it will be hard, I believe impossible, throughout all *heathen* story to meet with a conspiracy, designed or effected, that can come up to the barbarity of this: They must have called *Ætna* or *Vesuvius* into their assistance (if that could possibly have been obtain'd) to give such a murdering *blast*, such a consuming dispatch, to a nation and government, as in an instant to throw all into flames and confusion. Nay,

Nay, to speak in general, the comparison betwixt the *Roman* and *Romish* persecutions, cannot be charged with falsehood or uncharitableness; for it hath been observed and computed, that more blood hath been shed for the establishing *Po-pery* in these last ages, than for three hundred years was poured out by the *Heathens*, for the supporting their *Paganism*, and suppressing the innovations of *Christianity*.

Now how inestimable, even ineffable a blessing to the world, was the light of the Gospel, for the dispersing all the ethnical darkness and barbarity? And, next to that, how signal a blessing, for ever to be remembered in all the grateful memorials of praise and good living, was our *Reformation* from the errors, and our deliverances from the works of *Romish* darkness? more especially for the establishment of that Church, which surely we may be allowed to say, hath distinguished herself by the closest reasonings, the most learned confutations, the most continued undaunted oppositions against these our adversaries, for ever to keep off from us all clouds of darkness; and is herself fixed (we hope never to be dissettled) upon the truest and firmest basis of Primitive doctrine and discipline. *Now, now, are ye light in the Lord.* Which is the

II. Second proposition I purposed to speak upon, *Now are ye light in the Lord*: Most certainly the greatest blessing of heaven, from whence all light descends upon us: And it would indeed be a sad judgment, if a deprivation of it should by the order of providence befall us, as a necessary punishment, to make us prize it. The

vation, Christ our Lord, whilst he was upon earth, was the great light of the world, and now the holy Scriptures, which are by inspiration of God, are the only light that is left in us.

We know there is an abject sectary amongst us, that pretends to a *light within* him, and the more high-flown *Enthusiast* at Rome hath stiled himself the great *luminary* of the world; but these, and other wild pretensions of the like nature, may the more reasonably send us to the holy scriptures for our light. Here we shall plainly discover what we are to believe, and what we are to practice: *For that end*, says our Apostle, *all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfected, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

Here too we may be sufficiently enlightened (what our adversaries will not allow) to find out the true Church, with which we ought to communicate; and that without fear of being lost or confounded in the maze of their pretended circle. For tho' the Church pronounced the divine authority of the scriptures, yet as they were given by inspiration of God, so their authority was really precedent. Our Apostle, in the 2d chap. of this *Epistle*, lays down the series of this authority, *built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom you also are builded together for an habitation of God thro' the spirit.*

Here

Here is no circle, but the foundation first laid, and the temple, in the Lord, the Church, or habitation or household of God (as it is severally termed) erected upon it. The holy doctrines and precepts of Christ and his Apostles abetted by miracles, that is, by the exertion of the highest power of God, and their own most holy lives: and records made of these truths must be the prime foundation of our faith, and must continue so without being beholden to the Church for any authority but the declaration of their truths, and the sacred preservation of them; it is apparent then that the scriptures are our present light, and sufficient to *enlighten every man that cometh into the world*: They will avouch for our Church, for the truth of all our doctrines and precepts: and we have besides them the practice of the pure and primitive Church of Christ, as the standard for our discipline, and all the exercises of our religious worship.

With a little light the barbarous policy of the Church of *Rome* may be discover'd; to shut off the scriptures from the people, to keep them, as if mad and distracted, in darkness, knowing they must necessarily rave against their keepers, the priests, whenever they come into the light. The most illiterate amongst them would then be soon able to confute and confound their greatest doctors: And the decrees and canons of all their late Councils, and their whole Ecclesiastick cheat would soon become the common mockery of all Christendom: But like the evil doers they hate the light, *neither dare they come to the light, lest their doctrines should be reprov'd*. Their usage

on both sides is very hard and severe, To keep the scriptures from those that are within their communion, and To deny salvation to all that are without. This last dealing may prove of more fatal consequence to themselves than to us ; for tho' we can expect no mercy from them, in relation to our present lives and estates, when they have already proceeded farther and passed sentence of eternal damnation upon our souls ; yet we may be absolutely sure from the infinite justice and mercy of our God, that matters will be otherwise stated at the day of judgment ; and they, by making the highest breach of charity in pronouncing that sentence, will in all likelihood sooner determine their own than other mens damnation. Let us bless God, that we are out of their present reach, that we have happily escaped their many plots and machinations ; and their future menaces and denunciations can only be frightful to those that are already in the dark. The light that shines round about us, will become our safety and defence, and if we walk as children thereof, we shall be guarded, as well as directed by it, and may bid defiance to all the powers of darkness. In the third place,

III. I come to discourse upon the obligation indispensable upon us, that *we walk as children of light*.

Now *light*, in this and many other places of scripture, bears a relation to the practice as well as theory of religion. In a regular order of Christianity, the one will infer the other ; for a true light will give us such a view of all the truths in
the

the Gospel, that will so strongly prevail upon the understanding, as to bring over the will and affections in due conformity; because our doctrines being set in a true light are of so deep concern to our eternal well-being, that nothing but perverse and unnatural obstinacy, willful shutting our eyes against the light, strong lusts, resolutely indulg'd, and inveterate habits of sinning can hinder their influences upon our lives and conversations: Therefore is it the highest aggravation of sin, when it is committed against the light.

Let us then closely follow the work of our high calling whilst it is day lest the night come upon us unawares; when it will be impossible to redeem our time: Let us keep to our infallible rule of security, by *walking as children of the light*.

1. Not wavering, or stumbling *as in the dark*, but resolute and steadfast in the faith; not looking toward *Egypt*, or the kingdom of darkness; but let us stand fast *in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*, and not suffer our selves to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage; prizing the light more than life it self: Letting all go as generous confessors or Martyrs, rather than part with our religion, chusing rather to enter into the shadow of death, than into the valley of darkness.

2. Let us walk as *Children of the light*, by answering the proper effects of light: our Apostle, in the next verse following the Text, tells us, that the *fruit of the spirit*, is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth: *Fructus lucis*, the fruit of the light, as the *Latins* have it; and *St. Jerome* rejects the *Greek* lection, as I find in *Estius*, and

is most agreeable to the context where light was last mentioned. And these three, *Goodness, Righteousness*, and *Truth* are comprehensive of all duties both towards God and towards Man.

It will be too tedious to reckon up all the particular duties and obligations we lie under as *children of the light* : The scriptures, which are our light, are a plain and easy rule, and we cannot be at a loss : but a farther and more expeditious discovery of our duties may be made by examining our failures and deviations from the light ; and here we stand in need of the severest reprehensions : our Apostle calls upon us for the same purpose, *ver. 11.* following the Text, *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.* Sin, in truth, is greater darkness than error ; and we are come no farther than the borders of light, whilst our lives are unreformed, whilst the *Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.*

Amongst innumerable, we may instance in some few of our signal miscarriages, As,

1. By Hypocrisy ; the unhappy and malevolent infection of a true religion, as well as of a false one ; but certainly more pestilential in the former, and mortal to the shameless actor. How intolerable is it to cry out upon the *Pharisees*, both old and modern, for their hypocrisies, whom we in some measure excuse, by saying they were in darkness, and yet as impudently ourselves masquerade it in the light. How shameful is it, to be still calling out for *Reformation*, and greater purity in worship, and keep our hearts so unprovided of honesty and sincerity ? to act so much religion,

religion, and so much wickedness together? to rave with so much malice, and to pretend to moderation? Inconsistencies! as monstrous as any we can charge upon our enemies. Let us consider the Divine majesty, in whose presence all is transacted; an all-seeing God, and a searcher of the heart! it is impossible for us to put on a disguise that shall cover us from his sight: and we know ourselves how detestable a wretch a dissembler is, when we have found him out, and the vizard is taken off.

2. By Uncharitableness: I do not know of any even *Popish* tenet more directly contrary to the whole frame and oeconomy of the Gospel, than uncharitableness maintained and kept up. It rips up the very bowels of that mercy and goodness and forgiveness, which are the very life and essence of christianity: it throws us out of the protection of heaven, and gives our adversaries the better title to God's vindictive justice against us. Uncharitableness totally blinds our eyes, and makes us incapable of doing any duty aright. *He that saith, he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now: he that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because darkness hath blinded his eyes,* says St. John, 1 Epist. ii. 9, and following Verses.

Thus *Charity* divides the night and the day, and shuts out all malice into blackness and darkness for ever. And yet this accursed temper and practice, the great (not to say the only) instance of

of some mens zeal; who are not content to vent their rancour and malice against the common enemy (tho' that too be forbid by our religion), but let it fly with as much malevolence against their brethren, and those of the household of faith; who will not allow an honest peaceable man to be true to a cause, unless like themselves he be mad and outrageous for it; and will not stick at the most false and malicious stories (tho' as improbable as *Popish* legends) to raise the credulity of those that believe every thing against a Party, and to expose them to the barbarity of those that never spare. This is that petulant pick-thank zeal, that is always crying out *Fire*, and making false alarms in a neighbourhood, and yet is itself the greatest incendiary. This must be *darkness* with a vengeance, and such as may be felt, or else hell itself must be light.

And that this may not be looked upon, as an unfair surmise, or an unjust charge, I hope I may be allowed to give an instance or two, which are very notorious, as well as horribly scandalous. The first is the villany of reviling that Queen, (now advanced to a better kingdom) and reproaching her memory with all spiteful and unmerciful insinuations, who was the sovereign protectress of the *Protestant* religion, and the most illustrious example of *Protestant* piety; and had the welfare of every one of her subjects at her heart.

Another instance (much Christian and Protestant alike) is quarrelling at our late glorious peace, of which we have already experienced many happy effects: much blood hath been saved, of which true Christianity was ever tender, and more particularly

ticularly to which we owe the peaceable settlement of his present Majesty, without the least disturbance or opposition from any factions or pretensions whatsoever : and the clouds of fears too industriously spread over us, are all cleared up to the brightest serenity and sun-shine, to discover the shame of those that raised them.

Let us for shame leave this ugly disposition, and ill-natur'd licentiousness, to our adversaries, with all their murdering and assassinating doctrines and practices, to make up one mass of corruption and cruelty.

3. A third deviation from light is by Irreligion, a thick cloud of darkness that so visibly overshadows our light. We may hope it may prove for our good, as providence oft-times brings that out of evil : but how many zealous sticklers have we known for religion, who have themselves no religion at all. We are beholden to them (as *Switzers* and mercenaries fight) they may luckily bluster for the right cause ; but no thanks to their principles or inclinations ; they are the reproach of Christianity. He that prays to *Images*, or addresses himself to *Saints* or *Angels*, is a poor credulous wretch, and cannot but endanger his salvation : and he that believes *Transubstantiation* (if there be any that really do so) is lower than a brute ; for he knows not how to use his senses, or judge by them : and yet the famous writers of our Church against the *Papists* have allowed a distinction to fetch them off, who are under the circumstances of invincible ignorance, from being certainly damned, for these and the like stupid and abominable errors. But neither
scripture

scripture nor reason, nor the loosest Casuists can find out a distinction to save a profligate blasphemous wretch, that continues in his impieties, tho' he be a *Protestant* in profession, and the hottest Zealot for the right cause. If we would be thought *Children of the light*, and value our selves upon that character, of seeing farther than other men, let us raise our selves out of this abyss of darkness and forgetfulness, by considering; what it is impossible for us not to conclude, That a good life is the main end of religion, and the sole indication of a sound believer.

Let us then according to our Apostle's rule, *Rom. xiii. Cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light: let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

4. Lastly, (to instance no farther in these works of darkness) by *Atheism*. This is *darkness* with a vengeance too, wholly designed to extinguish our light. There are many ranks of Atheists (to use the word according to customary latitude) but together they make up a considerable party, and of some quality too, against the whole, at least the fundamental points of our revelation. As a salvo to their darling reason, they may possibly allow the first article of our Creed, and perhaps a common providence, and so pass under the more creditable name (as they think) of Deists. But for the mysteries of our religion, the Divinity, Incarnation, and Satisfaction of the son of God, they

they are as hard a test upon their faith, as *Transubstantiation*, and all the absurd mysteries of the *Romish* mass. And then what will become of the Christian religion, when they have pulled off the Glory from around our Saviour's head, and reduced us to what they have called a naked Gospel? He must be reckoned but *as one of the Prophets*; and a moral Philosopher, who hath been the *Founder of a Sect*, in their esteem, will be his equal, if not superior.

What articles shall we then have to exercise our faith upon, that peculiar heroick virtue of the Christian confessor? And what foundation shall we have for the belief and hopes of eternal life, if the holy Jesus, God and Man, and therefore of infinite value and sufficiency, hath not made satisfaction for our sins?

These are now the *new lights* of the world! they pretend to see more than all men besides! they despise all believers, as men of credulity and superstition! But whatever light they pretend to from nature and reason, let them look to it, and take heed, lest that *light that is in them do not prove darkness*: and if it is so, *How great is that darkness? Cum ratione insanire*; much reason, that is, the conceit of it, hath made them mad. To get the honour of subtile *Scepticks*, and rational enquirers here, and hereafter to fool themselves into damnation, is a faller step, and worse come-off, than the most credulous and superstitious can possibly make.

If our concern for religion, be as true as we pretend, now our zeal is up, let us exercise it in dispelling all these mists of darkness, as well as

the grand mystery of iniquity. Let us be sincere and in earnest in our religion, without hypocrisy. Let us love one another without dissimulation. Let us discountenance and abandon all irreligious liyers as the shame and pest of our Reformation, that bring down judgments even upon the purest profession. Let us confound with scorn the doughty reasonings of the *Atheists*, and no more trust to them for our souls, than to the vilest quacks and mountebanks for our bodies. They are men of no such parts or intellectual abilities, as they would have the world think them : They are to be esteemed the lowest and basest of the whole race of mankind ; employed in the vilest treachery, the meanest of all plots and designs ; brib'd by lust and libertinism, to undermine and destroy *our Church*, and all Christian religion.

But to conclude : Let us make it manifest to the *Papists* also, by our conformity to the *light*, that we are not of a Party, or distinct communion, by education or country, but by reason, persuasion, and sound conviction ; that we do not only outdo them in truth and scripture-authority, but also by our exemplary Lives ; that our Doctrines are not only Primitive and Apostolick, but our conversations likewise ; that our Reformation is not a notional, but a substantial, solid, and obliging-necessary separation, and the Schism is their own : we cannot away with their false doctrines and corrupt worship, and we have experience as well as reason, to make us abominate their cruel principles and practices.

By all which we shall silence gain-sayers, and cut off all occasion from those that desire occasion
against

against us, and most assuredly gain the interest of heaven on our side : for nothing but our sins, our manifest transgressions and prevarications against the *light*, can destroy us and our religion.

On *this day* we commemorate two most miraculous deliverances of this Church and Kingdom, when in so signal a manner God brought to light the *hidden works of darkness* : the particular relation of the former, I believe need not now be made ; many years repetition cannot but have settled lasting impressions upon the hearts of all good Protestants : and the latter cannot but be fresh in the memory of most of us.

Let us then for ever bless and praise the God of all mercies, who hath delivered us from the power of those whose principle it is to shew none to us. And let us for ever fortify our selves, by our continued prayers and holy living, against all their devices and conspiracies ; that our gracious Father would hide us from the secret council of the wicked, and from the insurrection of all the workers of iniquity ; that we may so walk as *Children of the light*, that we may never of our selves lapse into the estate, nor ever by our enemies be brought under the power, of darkness.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

And to the same God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, and three persons, be ascribed all power, majesty, and adoration now and for evermore. *Amen.*

F I N I S.



ERRATA.

PAGE 40. Line 5. for *mortaliferis*. read *mortalis eris*. p. 83.
l. 25. add *as*. p. 149. l. 14. f. *fore-fold*. r. *four-fold*. p. 191.
l. 16. dele, p. 212. l. 10. f. *Hac*. r. *Hec*. p. 343. l. 1. f.
Policy. r. *Polity*. p. 348. l. 10. f. *δοκιμαζετε*. r. *δοκιμαζοντες*.
p. 393. l. 18. f. *ἴατος*. r. *ἰδατος*. p. 406. l. 19. f. *reproach*.
r. *approach*.

VOL. II.

PAGE 121. is wrong printed 125. p. 224. is wrong printed
242. p. 225. for *Serm. XXVII*. read *Serm. XXVIII*. p. 389.
printed wrong 392. p. 392. printed wrong 381. p. 435. l. 13.
for *insuperable*. read *insuperable*. p. 439. l. 21. add *are*.

6 JY 59



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